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OR,

THE SUNKEN WILL.

BY ROGER STARBUCK,

AUTHOR OF THE FOLLOWING DIME NOVELS:

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THE

SPECTER SKIPPER

OR

THE BUNKER WILL

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Southern District of New York.

BY ROGER STANBROOK

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THE SPECTER SKIPPER.

CHAPTER I.

A SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE.

THE sinking sun shed long gleams of red light athwart the blue waves of Boston harbor, as the brig Nautilus, under top-sail and spanker, went bowling seaward before a breeze that sent the white spray in clouds over the weather-rail.

The brig was one of Commodore Porter's fleet, bound to the West Indies for the suppression of that system of piracy, which, in the year of which I write—1823—was become truly formidable among the isles and waters of the Caribbean Sea.

The captain of the Nautilus, at this moment standing upon his quarter-deck with his first lieutenant, was Robert Log—a sea-veteran, sixty years old, whose gold-banded cap and well-brushed blue naval coat contrasted well with his hair of snowy whiteness, and his brown, weather-beaten skin. A bluff, hearty old fellow, there was about the man a geniality which was pleasantly felt by all associates. True, he had a rather disagreeable habit of poking with his thumb his male acquaintances in the stomach, when speaking to them; but this was accompanied with such a grim, smiling twinkle of the clear blue eyes that it seldom excited ill-feeling.

The first lieutenant, George Watson, was a tall straight, well-proportioned, fine-looking young man of twenty-five, with clear gray eyes, skin tanned almost to the hue of an Indian's, and that air of easy familiarity with his present situation, which betokened the thorough-bred seaman.

His glance at present was turned shoreward, toward a stately white mansion, with a large park of fine old maples and other beautiful trees visible in the distance. Captain Log, seeing all at once to notice the direction of his gaze, clapped his

right hand familiarly on the young man's shoulder, while with the thumb of his other, he commenced his usual system of poking in the stomach.

"Great shame you were ever cheated out of your beautiful estate by that land-shark, your step-uncle."

The other smiled.

"I was not thinking of that. The fact is, I have been so long a sailor now, that I doubt if I could be tempted to give up blue water, even if yonder mansion and those magnificent grounds were to be restored to me."

"Ay, ay, that's like young blood. Never mind, my lad; your time will come."

"I was thinking of my unfortunate parents," sighed George, as he moved to another part of the deck to hide his emotion.

Sixteen years previously, his parents had left him at the mansion spoken of—the old family mansion—in charge of his step-uncle—an unprincipled man, who had always envied, without allowing his feelings to be known, his half-brother the possession of the estate. The parents were going to Europe—to England—to see about some property left to Mrs. Watson by a relative. They did not wish to take George with them, because he was, at that time, making good progress in his studies at a celebrated private school in Boston, and expected shortly to win a prize, and be promoted to the head of his class. In fact, the boy himself, more ambitious than most lads of his age, could not bear—much as he would have liked to travel in foreign lands—to leave school under such circumstances.

His parents, when they departed, took with them their will, bequeathing to George the whole of their property. Mr. Watson, unfortunately, left with his half-brother a paper, constituting him *sole proprietor of the homestead property during the whole period of his (Watson's) absence*. That he was wheedled into doing this by the latter seemed evident from what afterward happened.

After remaining in England a year, Mr. Watson wrote that he was about to start on his return to the United States, in the ship Clinton, with an addition to his family, a little daughter, born in England.

Days, months, years rolled away, but the Clinton never

arrived home. A piece of wreck, bearing the vessel's name, was found in the neighborhood of the West Indies—apparently all that would ever be discovered of the lost craft.

Now Thaddeus Watson, George's step-uncle, disclosed his true character. He showed the papers, with his brother's signature, constituting him sole proprietor of the homestead property, and took possession. The will having gone down with the ill-fated ship, George's right could not be proved. He was informed by the swindler that he might continue under the homestead roof until he could find something to do; but the high-spirited lad refused the offer with indignant contempt, and packing up his articles of apparel, went to ship in a vessel commanded by Captain Log, who was one of his father's old friends.

The captain took to the boy at once, procured him, in due time, a midshipman's warrant, and finally promoted him, as shown, to be first lieutenant of the *Nautilus*. Not by mere favoritism had the boy won his warrant, but by an act of heroism, which had recommended him at once to the notice of naval men. While in a terrific gale off Cape Hatteras, the captain, rather carelessly standing on the foam-washed quarter-deck, slipped off into the tempestuous waters. No person on earth could have saved him at that time but for the fact that young George, about coiling the main brace, stood near, and was thus enabled to take a turn round his breast with the rope, and jump overboard in time to catch the form of the captain in his arms and enable him to grasp the rope. The rope rubbing against the copper sheathing on the rail, was nearly severed in twain; the strain upon it by the *two* was more than it could long bear—one of them must either let go his hold or *both* perish.

Quick as a flash, the boy whipped out his sheath-knife.

"You have wife and child, I have *nobody*!" he cried, and severed the rope from his own body.

This was done before the captain could interpose.

A moment more and the brave lad must have drifted to his death, but for the captain's grasping him by the arm with one hand, while clinging to the rope with the other. Of course, in this situation of the two, the strain upon the piece of rigging was not half as great as before. A couple of

seamen jumped into the main chains, and drew both the imperiled ones safely aboard. From that moment the two became greater friends than ever. The captain, after a voyage, would invite to his house in Boston, the young midshipman, who spent many happy hours in the society of this old veteran, his wife and charming daughter, Lucia, the latter then but ten years old.

In time Lucia grew to a beautiful woman, when, naturally enough, the young people became lovers.

On the present occasion, Lucia was aboard the Nautilus, to take passage to New Orleans on a visit to a female cousin residing there. She came upon deck while George leaned over the rail, still gazing toward the homestead, and seeming at once to understand his thoughts, her eyes softened, while a gentle sigh betokened her interest in all that concerned the young man.

Truly beautiful was this girl. Her form was lithe and graceful, her hair fell in shining clusters nearly to her waist; nothing could have exceeded the sweetness of her expression. Her brow was as white as the sea-foam, her brown eyes, large and luminous, were full of spirit and gentleness, while the rounded curve of her chin and throat, so perfectly feminine, was really charming.

Suddenly chancing to turn her head, she noticed her father watching her with mischievous, twinkling eyes. She colored deeply, and turned aside her head.

"Never mind, Loo," muttered the old sea-lion, close in her ear; "he is a good lad, and you are not to blame for loving him."

"Oh, papa! why will you talk so?" answered Lucia, trying to look vexed.

Then an expression of sadness clouded her face, and she exclaimed:

"Oh, those dreadful pirates! Would that you were bound on any other errand!"

"Your lover will return, perhaps with honorable wounds, to marry you," answered Log, playfully.

The allusion to wounds drove from Lucia's mind every disposition to joke with her father. A vision of George, mangled and perhaps dying upon the deck, passed before her

mind. In fact, she was so painfully affected that she was fain to go below to hide her emotion.

Meanwhile George continued watching the homestead until it was no longer in sight. Then he turned away, endeavoring to change the current of his thoughts by gazing forward toward the men constituting the crew of the Nautilus.

One hundred in all, there were many foreign fellows among them—dark-looking men, whose expression George did not more than half like. The truth was that, in shipping his present crew, Log had acted with more than his usual precipitation. He was, in fact, in a hurry to obey his orders, which were to sail as soon as possible; so that he had had no time to pick his crew, as he had been hitherto in the habit of doing.

Commodore Porter was indeed in a hurry to have his fleet under way, as the journals had, previous to this, published regarding his intentions, such reports, as he feared would injure his proceedings by reaching the pirates, who, thus warned, would know how to prepare to escape the cruisers.

The lieutenant of the Nautilus seldom troubled himself regarding the looks of his crew; therefore he soon dismissed from his mind the disagreeable impression they had made upon it. That the men were good sailors he had readily perceived, when getting under way, by their manner of handling rope and canvas. That was the main consideration on a cruise like that in prospect, where the sailors might be called upon to act with coolness and skill in many a perilous emergency.

The sun went down—the moon came up. The brig, under all sail, was now becalmed, the breeze having died away with the setting of sun.

Watson being in charge of the first watch, was leaning over the quarter-rail looking at the water beneath him, in which he could see reflected the forms of several of the crew forward, seated upon the rails about the forecastle. These men were conversing in low tones, so that the lieutenant could not hear what they said, but he was surprised to perceive, by their shadows in the sea, that they turned round, now and then, apparently glancing toward him.

Finally—was he deceived or did he really see it?—one of

the men drew from his bosom something which looked marvelously to Watson like a long dirk !

He could detect in the calm water the movement of the fellow, who tapped the instrument, glancing as he did so toward the first officer.

Now if this was a knife, which Watson could not determine to a certainty, in the dim depths of the water, the maneuver was strange enough, if not darkly significant of some hidden purpose.

To clear his doubts upon the matter, Watson, suddenly looking up, whirled upon his heel, glancing forward, at the man who had held the instrument. Now, however, the fellow had nothing in his hand, but sat, apparently gazing unconcernedly to windward.

Determined to endeavor to satisfy himself, Watson moved forward.

All the men jumped to their feet, and touching their hats, made way for him, nothing in their aspect or manner different from the usual quiet, respectful demeanor resulting from the strict discipline of a ship-of-war.

"See here, lads !" he cried, sternly, eying the man he suspected, "which of you carries about him a dirk ? It is against the rules."

The sailor upon whom he gazed—a stout, swarthy fellow—withstood his glance with an air of mingled submission and composure.

"I do not ; nor my shipmates that I know of, sir."

"How is that ? I just saw you with a knife—a dirk."

The man colored suddenly, but whether from guilt or innocence the lieutenant could not determine. When he answered, the sailor spoke in a grieved tone, as if his feeling were wounded.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir," he said, taking off his hat, "no man or officer ever accused Dick Swivel of goin' ag'in' orders."

"I thought I saw a dirk in your hand. You tapped it, and glanced at me. I saw the reflection in the water."

A smile crossed the sailor's face.

"Sorry, sir, you were so mistaken. I understand now that is what you saw, sir."

And the man drew from his breast pocket an ivory marline-spike.

"The truth was, sir," he added, "I meant by what I did that there'd probably be work for us to-morrow in the rigging, seein' as them ratlines in the mizzen shrouds has given way."

This about the shrouds was true. The ratlines had broken beneath the feet of the sailors going aloft.

"I see I was mistaken," said Watson, in his turn smiling to think how he had been deceived.

As he spoke, an expression he could not exactly understand crossed the man's face. Was it exultation, or was it relief at his *honor* being cleared?

"Pshaw! I am getting suspicious," thought George, as he walked back to the quarter-deck, determined to dismiss the matter from his mind.

CHAPTER II.

UNEXPECTED.

WHEN Captain Log sailed, he had supposed that the fact of his being ahead of the rest of the fleet would afford him ample time to run down the Gulf to New Orleans, ere proceeding to cruise among the Bahamas.

More head-winds than usual, however, being encountered in the Stream, he was longer in reaching the Gulf than he had anticipated.

One day, a sail being espied by the man aloft, Log, glass in hand, mounted to the main yard to get a good look at it. He had not been on the yard two minutes, however, when the spar suddenly swung forward as the weather lifted, and he was precipitated to the deck—a distance of about twenty feet. His fall was a little broken by a coil of rigging, on which he struck; still, it was forcible enough to injure his hip, so that he was unable to rise without assistance. The doctor examined him carefully, and informed his daughter

that her parent was not seriously injured, that he would recover in a week sufficiently to move about and attend to his duties.

"Never mind me," said the old fellow, "but just keep the craft straight on her course for New Orleans, that Lucia may be put ashore."

"No, papa," she answered, "I do not want to be put ashore."

"How so? What mean you?"

"I will stay aboard to nurse my good old sea-lion," she answered, affectionately, wreathing his neck with her snowy arms.

"You aboard a craft after pirates! No such thing."

"But, I insist!" she answered, firmly. "So just put your craft on her course for the outer Bahamas, which I know you are dying with impatience to reach."

"That is true, ma'am," said the doctor, aside to her; "you have done the best thing you could for my patient. The delay in going to the islands would have set him into a fever, thus retarding his cure."

"Ahoy, there! What are you two whispering about, eh? None of that, now, doctor."

And the patient, weak as he was, raised himself upon his elbow and gave the other a furious poke with his thumb in the stomach.

"I am to stay here, papa," continued Lucia.

Vainly the captain opposed her. She was gentle yet firm, and contrived so to show him the advantage of her remaining aboard that he was finally reconciled.

The old captain soon fell asleep. Lucia went on deck a moment to get a mouthful of pure sea-air, and saw Lieutenant Watson superintending the repairing of the parted lift.

He raised his cap to her and smiled; then he asked her how her father was.

"Much better. I am to stay aboard to nurse him," she added, with glowing cheek and bright eyes covertly watching the young man to note the effect of her words.

Instantly his whole face lighted up.

Lucia blushed with pleasure.

"I have no doubt I shall be very useful," she continued

“Provided”—half laughing—“I am not killed by a shot from the pirates.”

“We will look out for that,” he answered, glancing round with quiet pride at the brig’s ten guns, forward and amidships.

“What made that rope part?” she went on. “I thought you sailors always kept vessels in good order.”

“I am as much surprised as you are. Only yesterday I had a man aloft at work on that very lift. Mr. Burchell,” he added, turning to a short, stout fellow, not far distant, “I gave orders to you yesterday to attend to that lift?”

“Ay, ay, sir,” answered Burchell, who was the sailing-master. “I spoke to the boatswain about it, who sent a man up.”

“Did *you* inspect the lift after it was repaired?”

“Yes, sir, and I am sure the work was well done. I can not imagine why it parted unless it became strained when the yard was braced up sharp.”

Before night the vessel was upon her course for the Bahamas. If the wind should hold as at present, she would reach them in about three days. Meanwhile, as the craft went bowling along, nothing could exceed the beauty, night and day, of the Caribbean atmosphere and transparent waters—the latter so clear that, in calm weather, one might see far down, to the depth of many feet. In the daytime it was delightful to watch the flying-fish sporting round the bows, or, like a quiver of silver, darting clear across the decks, sometimes as high as the main yard. Occasionally one of the little creatures, falling short of its mark, would tumble upon the brig’s deck.

Many seafaring men think that the skin of this fish is a cure for moon blindness—an affection which many sailors are troubled with from sleeping on deck with the moon shining full upon their eyes.

At night the beautiful weather was truly refreshing, while the aspect of the ocean was like that of some fairy realm.

Far and near the reflection of the stars was observed in the water; the points of their little rays floating about like liquid gems, while the columns of white spray, occasionally tossed upward, with the long lines of moonlight falling upon them,

might have been compared to the snow-white arms and hands of sea-fays holding wands of silver.

Lucia, a lover of nature in all its phases, enjoyed these things much. Standing by Watson's side, and conversing without fear of interruption in the still night-watches, it seemed to her that the present was the happiest period of her life. The blue sky, the wonderful moonlight of this region, almost as clear as day, the countless clusters of stars, which seemed more numerous here than elsewhere, the rustling breeze, the white sails with their shadows upon the water all seemed in perfect unison with the feelings both of herself and her lover.

In due time the lofty Cibao—a chain of mountains in the center of St. Domingo—were seen lifting their blue summits far up among the clouds.

The delicious fragrance of orange and lemon trees was now borne across the water to the people aboard the brig, while whole flocks of aquatic birds, peculiar to the coast, flew round the vessel.

The moment land was sighted, old Log, now nearly cured of his lameness, came on deck. The sight of the mountains brought fire to his eyes and new color to his cheeks, made swarthy from confinement. He glanced round him, aloft and aloft, to see that every thing was in good order, then had look-outs stationed not only at the main-mast head but also at the fore.

"Look sharp!" cried the old fellow, his voice cutting through the air like the buzzing of a saw. "If you see any suspicious-looking craft—lugger, sloop, or schooner—see that you sing out. A gold guinea to the man that first sights me one of those rascally sails!"

So, with eyes sharpened by the promised reward, the three seamen, bending far out from the mast, as they swung between sea and sky, swept the waters with searching glances.

Nothing was seen until next morning, when a voice like that of a bird was heard, apparently far up among the clouds.

"Sail—'O-o!"

"Whereaway?" screamed Log, bursting from the cabin, his nautical mouth twisted to one side in a grim smile.

"Ahead ! about two miles off," was the answer—"heading this way !"

"Then it's no pirate !" growled the captain, in disappointed voice.

The brig, bowling on her way, was soon within speaking distance of the sail, which proved to be a small boat, containing a middle-aged man and a young girl.

In the stern-sheets there were lemons, oranges and bananas.

"A fruit-vender," said Log. "He wants to come aboard."

The foretopsail was backed, a rope was thrown, and the boat soon was along-side, and its occupants came aboard.

There was about the man an air of poverty and simplicity rather calculated to excite pity than suspicion. His shoulders were bowed, his face thin and sharp, his eyes half protruding from his head with an expression almost idiotic. His voice, too, was almost as weak as that of a child.

His companion was a girl of rare loveliness, with blue eyes, dove-like in their expression, regular but mobile features, and hair of a dark chestnut color, parted back from the smooth, white brow, and falling in wavy, rippling masses down her neck and shoulders. Although not as tall as Lucia, yet her form was unrivaled in its proportions. Nothing could have been more graceful than the curve of the waist, the turn of the white, rounded wrist, and the little ankle just visible beneath the blue merino dress that graced her person.

Her modesty had at once shown itself in this, that she hung back as if not caring to board the vessel until her companion motioned to her in rather a decided manner to do so. Now she stood blushing at the earnest gaze of the officers riveted with respectful admiration upon her sweet countenance.

Lucia slightly bit her lip as she noticed that George watched the young girl with interest. The fact was, the lieutenant, without knowing it, showed plainly that there was about the new-comer a something which attracted him.

Looking round at the officers, and evidently pleased with the attention his companion excited, the man said :

"Do you want any fruit, good men ?"

Every officer wanted something, so that in a few minutes

all the fruit was out of the boat, while the vender jingled, with a smile of satisfaction, the coins he had earned.

He was moving toward the gangway as if to depart, when the captain called him back.

"What is your name?"

"John Croft, if you please, sir."

"Well, John Croft, have you lately seen any pirate craft in this place—eh?"—poking, in his usual manner, the fruit-vender in the stomach with his thumb. He poked so hard that the man drew back with puckered face. Then he looked up, as if not exactly understanding the question.

"Pirate craft—pirate vessels?" repeated Log.

"Please, sir, excuse me. Vessels? yes, I have seen small vessels, with bad men in them, who rob and steal."

"Hah! How long ago?"—taking a guinea from his pocket.

The man drew a hand over his brow as if to recall his recollection; then he said:

"Yesterday I saw one of those vessels. I think I know where it went."

"Oh, you do! Lieutenant," turning to Watson, "we must keep this man aboard. You shall be well paid," he added, as the vender looked somewhat downcast.

At these words his face brightened.

"I am, please sir, nothing of a sailor," he answered, "but I think I can point out where the bad men go, a great deal."

"Is this your daughter?" inquired Captain Log.

"Yes, sir. She is a good girl, my Dot, just sixteen years old. She knows more than most poor girls like her, sir; she can read, write, and play on the guitar. I am proud of her. What shall I do with Dot," continued the man, "if I am to stay aboard?"

"She can be accommodated. Lucia will take charge of her," said Log, bowing to his daughter.

"Yes, papa," answered the latter, in spite of herself feeling a little vexed.

She was kindly disposed toward the poor fruit-vender's child; yet she did not like the impression the girl had seemed to produce upon Watson.

The vessel was now within about three leagues of Cape

Beatta, whose summit towered in the distance. The last rays of the setting sun gilded the headland, while further beyond, the luxuriant green shrubbery, through which could be distinguished the glancing of cascades and clear running streams, was seen crowning the tops and sides of the mountains. The palm, the Brazilian, the orange and lemon tree could be distinguished as the vessel drew nearer, their stems and leaves covered with webbed gauze-work, seeming to gleam with thousands of silver threads. Nearer still, the long sugar-cane, rising straight up in air, waved like a golden sea in the wind.

"We had better lay off and on until morning," said Log to his sailing-master. "There is a mist rolling down from those mountains, and it will soon cover the sea."

"If you please, sir," suggested the fruit-vender, "there is excellent anchoring-ground about fifteen miles to the north and eastward. I have often been there to load boats with my fruit. Besides, you will there be hidden from the pirates, who otherwise would be apt to discover you in the morning."

Log consulted his sailing-master, who thought the plan of anchoring a good one.

The wind rose almost to a gale as they bowled on, but the night set in clear, if we except a slight mist, which, as Log had predicted, now covered the water.

The vessel, under shortened sail, and with only a quarter-watch on deck, was running along parallel with the coast, with good look-outs, the fruit-vender and an old sailor on the knight-heads. The captain had gone below to sleep, the second lieutenant, who had charge of the watch, being ordered to wake him in two hours.

Before that period Watson waked, and thought he would just step on deck to look at the compass, as it struck him, by the vessel's motion, that her course had been changed.

The moment he emerged from the cabin he beheld a sight as unexpected as it was startling.

The second lieutenant lay senseless upon the deck. The meek John Croft, now towering straight, tall and stern, held a pistol pointed at the head of Dot, who stood holding so firmly to the wheel, which with her own fair hands she had

put a-port, that several men, who were endeavoring to pull her away from it, were unable to accomplish their purpose.

Now the sails began to shake; there was a roaring, hissing sound; something black loomed up close off the vessel's side. They were rocks!

"Saved!" cried Dot. "I HAVE SAVED THE CRAFT! You are welcome to shoot me now, father!"

With fierce exclamation, Croft raised the pistol as if to strike.

"ALL HANDS AHoy!" thundered Watson, in a voice that seemed to go right through the ship's timbers.

Then he sprung upon Croft and wrenched the pistol from his grasp.

CHAPTER III.

THE SPECTER SKIPPER.

THE decided behavior of the lieutenant seemed to disconcert those who had been endeavoring to force Dot from the wheel. They drew back, the pretended fruit-vender springing like a deer to the gangway and into the boat alongside.

"Now, then, give an account of yourselves!" cried the lieutenant, pointing the pistol he had obtained at the two seamen in front of him.

As he spoke, some of the hands came up from forward, where it was plain they had been lying fast asleep, while the captain, the sailing-master, and a couple of midshipmen, appeared on the quarter-deck.

"We've got nothing to say," remarked one of the men, sullenly, in answer to Watson's query.

Neither could the captain obtain any information from the sailors, who seemed determined to maintain an obstinate silence.

"It seems we have traitors amongst us," said Log to Watson; "how many, we have no means of finding out. This comes of shipping a crew in a hurry."

He then ordered the two mutineers to be handcuffed and thrust into the main hold.

By this time the second lieutenant had recovered his senses. Watson assisted him to his feet, when the officer recalled all he could remember of past events.

He had been struck on the head by some heavy implement—had turned to confront Croft, who dealt him another blow, after which he knew no more until the present moment.

Meanwhile Dot, who had been relieved at the wheel, now stood by the weather-rail, her elbows upon it, her face hidden by her hands.

"Madam," said Log, advancing, "it seems you have served us a good turn. It is now plain your father is one of the pirates, while *you* are friendly to us. Is that not so?"

"Ask me no questions, please," replied Dot, shuddering. "I have nothing to say."

"Nay, my lass, but you have benefited us thus far. Why not disclose every thing? We will reward you well."

The blue eyes were raised to the speaker's face with an expression of mingled pity and contempt.

"You ask me to sell my father's life for gold. No, sir, I will not do that. He has always treated me roughly; still, in some things he has been kind. But, understand me: had he whipped me with leather thongs from my childhood, I would not barter his life for gold."

Captain Log turned very red. The girl's clear eyes abashed him.

"Ay, ay," he remarked, poking his lieutenant, as usual, "the girl has taken me aback. Madam," he added, "suppose you give us the desired information out of kindness."

"It would not be kind of me to betray my father."

Other persuasions were tried, but in vain. Dot said that she would do all in her power for the good of her fellow creatures; still, she would not say a word which would bring injury to her father.

"Land, 'O!" screamed the man on the look-out, at the instant.

"Whereaway?" queried Log.

"Right ahead!"

"Your look-out is mistaken," said Dot; "the land is not

ahead, although it looks to be so, in the mist. You had better anchor, at once."

The captain eyed the speaker suspiciously. Ashamed the next moment of his doubts of one who had saved his vessel, he gave instant orders for anchoring.

It does not take a hundred men long to get anchor and cable ready. The rattling of the cable was soon heard through the hawse-hole, and with a crash, the ponderous fluke iron sunk down to the bottom of the sea.

"Now," said the captain, as the vessel swung to, "call all hands aft."

The lieutenant transmitted the order, and the boatswain's shrill piping soon was heard splitting the air.

All hands came aft and were ranged to leeward.

"Now," said Log, after he had picked out men who, having sailed with him on former voyages, he knew he could rely upon, "the rest of you are a puzzle to me. There are, I dare say, honest men among you, but I am also certain, from what has happened, that there are also *traitors*—fellows who are either in league with the pirates we are after, or else who are **anxious to join them.**"

As he spoke, he eyed the seamen keenly, but there was no betrayal of guilt on their stern, composed faces.

"One thing is certain," continued Log: "if you hope to mutiny, or in any other way injure the Nautilus or her honest people and officers, you will find yourselves baffled and punished as you deserve. The first lubber I catch, I'll have him **strung up.**"

The captain's eyes gleamed fire from his white, frosty beard; he looked at each man as if he would pierce him through. Still, there was no sign of guilt on the faces of those he surveyed.

He dismissed them; then turning to Watson, ordered him to have a party of trusty sailors (there were no marines aboard) under arms, every night, to guard against a surprise.

"I suppose you will leave us to-morrow," said Lucia to Dot.

Alarmed by the noise on deck, the captain's daughter had come up almost as soon as her father.

She had heard the conversation between the latter and Dot—had noticed, with a feeling of vexation, that Watson's eyes were riveted upon the blue-eyed girl with the same expression of interest she had noticed before. Hence she did not look forward with the least regret to the time when, she supposed, the pirate's daughter would leave the vessel. She was not, therefore, over-pleased at Dot's reply to her question.

"No. I do not want to go. I would prefer staying in this brig."

"Indeed! I should think you would prefer getting back among your friends."

"They are not my friends. There is not one among them I love, or would not prefer to desert. For that reason I would like to go to America in this vessel."

"What? You would be willing to desert your own father?"

Dot colored. For an instant a tear dimmed her eye; then she answered "Yes," in a sad voice.

Lucia became silent. She felt drawn to the poor girl, and yet, the truth must be owned, she was a little jealous of her. Her keen woman's eye had traced respect and admiration, if not the dawn of a deeper feeling, in the glances which the pirate's daughter had directed at the young lieutenant.

Neither of the two girls slept much that night. At sunrise they were on deck, when Lucia was much interested in the brig's situation. She was lying in a small bay of semicircular formation, with walls of rock rising on each side. There was, however, nothing rough or angular about these rocks, which were all nearly hidden by the luxuriant vegetation. Long vines, covered with red flowers, hung down, touching the water, while the thorn-thistle and the broad-leaved palm-tree grew from many of the crevices.

Gazing shoreward, the spectator beheld the most beautiful scenery that mind could imagine. There were groves of beautiful trees extending inland, revealing green, sloping lands covered with white, blue, and crimson flowers, seen through vistas in the shrubbery, and here and there diversified by beautiful cascades, falling over moss-covered rocks, which were thus partially veiled by a gauze-work of rainbow-tinted spray

and thousands of water-drops dancing like liquid gold and silver wherever they caught the rays of the rising sun. Further beyond, extending far away to the east and the north, rose the blue peaks of the Cibao mountains, their summits veiled here and there by fleecy white clouds.

"Beautiful!" murmured Lucia. "I do not see how you could bear to leave such an island."

"Oh, yes," said Dot, clasping her hands, and gazing delighted upon the green paradise beyond—"I love my island and shall be very sorry to leave it; but where there are bad men, you know—"

She paused as if fearful of saying too much, while Lucia looked impatient on seeing Dot glance toward Lieutenant Watson, who was now aft near the wheel.

He stepped forward and touched his cap to the two girls.

"Will you be good enough, madam," he said to Dot, "to point out to me the rocks which we so narrowly escaped last night?"

Unhesitatingly the girl indicated, with one little finger, a line of rugged, half-submerged rocks, over which the surf was constantly breaking with a roar. The reef was about three miles from the opening of the bay.

"In stormy weather," continued Dot, "you can not see them. There are many unseen sunken rocks beyond, extending far away into the sea. These are dangerous waters," she added, "for those who are not familiar with them."

"Neither Captain Log nor I ever cruised off this part of the Domingo coast before," said Watson.

"Then," remarked Dot, blushing beneath the glance of the young man's eyes, "I will be of good use aboard your vessel during your cruising."

"What! do you not intend to leave us?" inquired Watson.

Lucia did not like the tone of *pleased* surprise in which her lover spoke. She concealed her chagrin, however, so that it was not observed.

Dot answered that, with the captain's permission, she would like to stay aboard the vessel and go to America.

"I will speak to the captain, and have no doubt that he will consent," answered Watson.

He went at once into the cabin, returning soon after to inform the girl that the captain would be pleased to have her stay.

"*And you too!*" thought Lucia, turning aside her head to hide the moisture gathering in her eyes.

Two hours later the wind had freshened to a gale, compelling Log to let go both anchors. Partially sheltered from the wind, the position of the brig was yet such as to command a good view of the open ocean beyond. There the great seas were rising and coming in toward the bay with a din like rolling thunder.

Toward night the gale increased; the sun was obscured, and thick masses of sand and rack were seen passing over the sea like great hooded phantoms.

"Do you think we can ride out the gale where we are?" inquired the captain of Dot.

"Yes, sir. I have seen vessels safely anchored here in a hurricane."

"On deck, there!" came down from aloft at this instant.

"Hello!" bawled Log. "What is it?"

"Don't know, sir. See something away off there to windward—something *white on top of the water!*"

Dot, standing on the tips of her toes, with her ear inclined toward the speaker, was now all attention. Her attitude would have formed a model to delight an artist. The spirited curve of the neck, the lithe turning of the whole form, the eager gleaming of the soft, upturned eyes, with the waving of the sunny brown curls, made a pleasing picture.

Log, swinging his spy-glass over his shoulder, now mounted aloft to the main topsail yard, followed by Lieutenant Watson.

Clapping the glass to his eye, the captain took a long survey.

"Can't make it out," said he. "See something white. If I was a whaler," he added, with a grim smile, "I might think it was the *white whale!*"

"It looks to me like the bottom of a capsized craft, painted white," said Watson.

"Ay, ay; but you can't see it well with the naked eye. Just take a squint through that," presenting his glass

The lieutenant, after a long survey, acknowledged himself puzzled.

"It is *not* a capsized craft," said he, "and if it was a sea monster, we should see it move."

"Ay, ay; there's what puzzles me," exclaimed Log; "its being so motionless."

The rigging, the bowsprit, the yards, the booms—every part of the brig, in fact, was now covered with the seamen, all gazing toward that curious white spot upon the water.

Some of the men said it was a great turtle, caught upon a rock; others that it was the top of a capsized boat.

The falsity of every guess, however, was soon proved, when an apparition, as unexpected as it was singular, suddenly met the gaze of the spectators. In a word, what had seemed a mere white spot, suddenly rose from the water, looming through the scudding rack, until nearly the whole of the gigantic form of a man, holding, elevated in his right hand, a great speaking-trumpet, was plainly revealed, towering from the sea!

What added to the singularity of this strange apparition was the fact that, from the broad-rimmed hat to the bottoms of the canvas pants—ay, even to the speaking-trumpet—this vision was of a ghastly white, thus plainly contrasting with the black storm-mist rolling round it!

There was a murmur of wonder aboard the brig, deepening every moment, until the ringing voice of Dot was heard, like weird music through the storm:

"IT IS THE SPECTER SKIPPER!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE LOG-BOOK LEAF.

As Dot spoke, the vision suddenly vanished before the wondering spectators.

"You called it the Specter Skipper," said Captain Log, as he descended from aloft. "Pray, *who*, or *what*, is this skipper?"

"The apparition has been seen, now and then, by the inhabitants of this coast, for the last three years," answered Dot.

"How does your father account for it?"

"I have nothing to say on that point."

"Well, really, I must own I am taken aback. Mirages off this coast are common enough, but I never heard of one of this kind."

Forward, the vision was considered by some as a foreboding of evil to the brig, and to those aboard.

All the rest of the day and far into the night it was the subject of discussion, fore and aft. Next morning it was discovered that the two men who had been confined had deserted by swimming ashore. One of the armed seamen, who, by Log's orders, had been stationed on deck as a guard, had seen the outlines of the men after they jumped into the sea and were making ashore.

"One thing is certain," said the captain, "these men have gone to betray our whereabouts to the pirates. Mr. Watson, you must take the cutter and go ashore to see if you can obtain any trace of these deserters."

"Ay, ay, sir," answered Watson, and in a few minutes his boat was ready and manned.

It is always noticeable that a boat's crew, when pulling after deserters, never exert themselves as they might upon a different occasion. Unfortunately, the cutter's crew was partly composed of those who were under the ban of suspicion. These fellows really shirked at their oars.

"Men," said the lieutenant, after quietly remarking this for several minutes, "we are on an important mission, and neither the place nor the time is fit for desertion, especially when there is no cause for complaint. You have all been treated like men by Captain Log, who is, what he has the reputation of being, a good officer. Therefore it is not right for you to shirk at your oars, for the purpose of helping those who have run away."

At this speech, many of the men took to pulling with good will, but others still lagged.

The lieutenant quietly drew a pistol from his pocket, his eyes smoldering fire.

"Now, then," he said, leveling it at the "shirks,"—"pull *hard or you are dead men!*"

His determined manner convincing those he addressed that he meant what he said, they obeyed his command, pulling vigorously the rest of the course.

In a few minutes the boat struck the beach, when, taking with him a couple of men, the lieutenant, leaving his boat in charge of the coxswain and the rest of the crew, started inland, following certain marks, such as trampled-down grass and broken bushes, indicating the direction pursued by the deserters.

Finally he came to a spot where the signs alluded to seemed to diverge. Accordingly he sent the two men one way while he pursued the other. The lieutenant's course led him through a dense thicket, full of sweet fragrance and blooming flowers, some of which, twining around trees, formed beautiful bowers. Ahead of him he now beheld one of those pretty cascades of which mention has already been made, but which had been swollen by the recent heavy rain until it had nearly assumed the proportions of a torrent. With the subsiding of the gale and the rain, the waters had passed away, leaving the earth so damp, however, where it had been, that impressions were easily left upon it. There were some on it now—the marks of human feet, so plainly revealed that one might almost have told the kind of shoe which had left them.

Following the tracks, the lieutenant soon found himself opposite a hollow in the rock down which flowed the cascade.

Peering into this hollow, he beheld the outline of a human form.

"Who is there?" he inquired, holding his pistol ready.

At first there was no answer; but presently, rushing suddenly upon him, with a drawn dirk, appeared one of the deserters—Dick Swivel—the same man, it will be remembered, in whose hand Watson had fancied he saw a knife on that night while he was gazing at the reflection of the stranger's forms in the water.

"Heh! so you now reveal your true character!" exclaimed the young officer. "Stand where you are, and throw down your knife at once, or I will shoot you!"

He grasped the ruffian by his collar with one hand as he

spoke, while pressing with the other the muzzle of his pistol against the fellow's forehead.

Perceiving that he was in the lieutenant's power, the man readily complied with his request, throwing down his knife and folding his arms.

"Where is the other man?"

"I don't know. We separated below here. He was right and I was wrong, it seems. He is probably with the pirates—"

The speaker paused, as if conscious that he had said too much.

"I understand," said Watson. "You deserted to join the pirates. Is that not so?"

"You have guessed it," answered the other, doggedly.

"There is a band of rascals aboard that brig, perhaps with like intentions. Give me their names."

"I never betray a shipmate," answered Swivel.

"That is laudable among honest men, but not among thieves and pirates. One night you deceived me by your air of pretended innocence, by stating it was simply a marine-spike and not a dirk which I had seen in your hand. You will not deceive me again. Tell me at once the names of all the traitors aboard that brig, or, as true as there is a sky above us, I will shoot you."

"And suppose I tell you?"

"Well, you will at all events have to go with me aboard the brig, to be handcuffed and confined in the run."

"I will tell you the names—or," he added, "if you will give me a paper and pencil, I will write them."

"Sit down, then," said the lieutenant, indicating a spot in front of him.

Swivel complied. Watson gave him paper and pencil. For a moment the man seemed to reflect; then slowly traced upon the paper the names of twenty men.

"Are those all?"

"Yes, sir."

Watson read the names, and was surprised, as several were the last he would have suspected.

"Now, then, come; go ahead of me, and mind, if you attempt to escape you are a dead man."

"You need not fear."

As he spoke, the fellow rose and moved on ahead of the lieutenant, in the direction pointed out by the latter.

They had not proceeded many steps, when there was a rustling in the shrubbery not far off. A moment later, two men made their appearance, to be recognized by the lieutenant as those who had accompanied him, but from whom he had afterward separated.

"Well, did you find the other fellow?" inquired Watson, as they came up.

"No, sir," answered one of the new-comers.

The lieutenant thought he could detect a singular look or intelligence exchanged between these men and the one he had captured. Before he further remarked upon it, one of them sprung behind him and wrenched his pistol from his grasp, at the same time seizing him by the back of the neck.

"Now is your time, boys!" he exclaimed, when the other two, pouncing upon the astonished officer in front, he was thrown to the ground.

"Shoot him!" cried Dick Swivel, fiercely, to the man who had obtained the pistol.

"No," answered the other, "we will take him to Rondo, who, perhaps, had rather *we* should not slay him."

"If I had my way," cried Swivel, "I'd shoot him."

"Rondo would make you swing for it."

Meanwhile he who now spoke had his knees upon the lieutenant's breast, so that he could scarcely move that part of his body, while another held him by the throat.

Watching his chance, however, Watson suddenly made a desperate effort, while the man's knees were relaxed, to disengage himself.

He partially succeeded.

"Ahoj, there! at the boat—" he exclaimed, when he was interrupted by a blow from the stock of the pistol upon his temple.

It was so violent that he fell senseless, and must have remained thus while the men carried him off; for when he became conscious he found himself lying on a blanket on a hard floor in a rocky chamber, lighted by a solitary lamp. Without, the wash of the waves proclaimed his vicinity to the sea,

while the voices of men, conversing in low tones, were perceptible not far away.

The room was of circular formation, the walls of rough-hewn rock, and the floor of cedar planks, closely put together and cemented with clay. Upon the sides of this chamber were hung many implements of nautical warfare, such as boarding-pikes, cutlasses, dirks, and pistols, while here and there were pictures of beautiful Naiads, ships, and other water-scenes.

Having taken a brief survey of his quarters, Watson was endeavoring to recall his scattered recollections, when there was a heavy step, a canvas screen at one side of the chamber was lifted, and the pretended fruit-vender, who had given his name as John Croft, entered.

Perceiving that the lieutenant had recovered, the man drew a rude stool to his side and sat for some moments, gazing intently upon him without speaking.

Watson could perceive that Croft had changed his attire since he left the brig, as he now wore a blue jacket, canvas pants, a red sash, and a broad-rimmed straw hat.

"You see you are in the lion's den," said the man, with a grim smile.

"You know better where I am than I do myself," answered Watson.

"Well, then, you are with those whom you wanted to get in your clutches. This is the *pirates' hall*, as we call it, and such of our enemies as get in here seldom go out."

Watson yawned.

"That is not the question. How came I here?"

"You were brought here by some of my spies—men who slipped aboard your brig; you ought to know that by this time."

This hint enabled the lieutenant to remember all

"Where are those rascals now?"

"Safe enough. They will witness your death."

"So you intend to murder me?"

"Yes," answered the other, grinding his teeth. "You and your cursed crew will find they have got into a hornet's nest. Would I could serve all who come to chase us from these lakes as I intend to serve the crew of that brig!" he added,

clenching his fist, and striking a stool near him with such force that it was split in twain.

"You had better wait till you *get* the brig," said Watson.

"That will not be long. Meanwhile your execution takes place to-morrow."

"Let it be so," answered Watson, quietly, although inwardly he shuddered. • No cheerful man, although he may *dare* death a thousand times, cares to perish in the vigor of his manhood, and especially with the bright vision of his intended bride in his mind.

Watson thought of Lucia—of the anguish which would overwhelm this girl, who loved him dearly, when he should never return to her.

"So you perceive," continued the pirate, "that the prediction of trouble spoken of aboard your brig will be fulfilled. The *Specter Skipper* did not appear for nothing."

"What know you of what took place aboard the brig?"

"They who brought you here informed me. The appearance of that strange sea-apparition," he solemnly added, "always forebodes evil."

"Nonsense. I do not believe in such foolish superstitions."

"You will see to-morrow. We have here a peculiar way of executing prisoners."

"You will shoot me, I suppose."

"No. See here!"

As he spoke, the pirate walked to a corner of the cave and took therefrom a couple of twenty-pound shot, linked together by a chain.

"We fasten these to your legs to-morrow, the same as if you were already a dead body, when down you go to the bottom!"

"Who are you who can do such a savage deed as this?"

"I am Rondo, the captain of a party of pirates, who have sworn to stand by me through weal or woe."

"You are a thief and murderer."

"I have as good a right to earn my living as you yours."

"Lawfully, yes; not at the price of blood."

"Enough," answered Rondo. "I leave you till to-morrow. Perhaps you would, meanwhile, like to amuse yourself. Here are some books."

From a shelf at one side of the cave he took some old, musty-looking volumes, which, with sarcastic laugh, he threw to the young man.

When he was gone, Watson, endeavoring to rise, perceived that he was fastened to his couch by means of ropes round his legs, secured to ring-bolts in the wall.

Sighing, he picked up one of the volumes, to perceive it was Spanish. Rondo, presuming that Watson knew nothing of that language, had thrown him the books simply to torture him.

He failed of his object, for the lieutenant could read Spanish as well as English. Opening the volume, something dropped out. It was the old stained leaf of a ship's log-book, with writing on it, partially defaced by the damp, yellow stain of time. Two words, however, were quite plain; they were, "SHIP CLINTON," plainly visible at the top of the page.

"The name of the lost vessel in which my parents sailed from England!" cried Watson, much excited. "How came that paper here?"

A fearful thought flashed upon his mind. It was this: that the ship had been captured by Rondo and his party, and all hands and passengers massacred.

Was the fate of the Clinton at last discovered?

CHAPTER V.

AN UNEXPECTED INTRUDER.

THE young man's brain fairly reeled at the presumed discovery he had made.

On reflection, however, it occurred to him that, after all, Rondo may have had nothing to do with the capture of the Clinton. The vessel, as was generally supposed, may have been wrecked off the coast, and some articles from her have drifted ashore, among them the log-book—perhaps in the captain's chest.

He burned with impatience to see Rondo and question him.

Meanwhile his friends aboard the brig had grown uneasy at his protracted absence. It was now nearly night, twelve hours having passed since Watson left the vessel to seek for the deserters.

At length the cutter was seen returning. Both Lucia and Captain Log peered eagerly over the side, when, not seeing Watson in the boat, their fears were augmented, Lucia trembling so that she could scarcely stand.

The coxswain, leaping up the gangway, touched his cap and briefly related the lieutenant's disappearance, with that of two of the men.

"Thinking they must have lost their way," he continued, "we searched for many hours, but couldn't find a trace of 'em beyond a sartin spot, where there was signs of a struggle."

Log started. Lucia shuddered, and uttered a cry of dismay.

"He has been murdered!" she wildly cried.

"Hush, my child. I don't believe any thing of the sort. What do *you* think about it, coxswain?"

"Hard telling, sir. But I don't *think* the lieutenant was killed. If he had been, we would have found his body during our search."

"So I think."

The coxswain was now dismissed, when, turning, Log beheld Dot by Lucia's side, endeavoring to soothe her. The latter, however, could perceive that the pirate's daughter was herself very uneasy. There were tears in her blue eyes, and now and then she would shudder, as if at some fearful thought.

"What do *you* think?" inquired the captain; "not that he has been made 'way with?"

"No, I do not think *that*," she answered, hurriedly.

"You believe as I do, perhaps: that he has fallen into the hands of the pirates."

"Yes, sir; I am afraid so."

"Therefore you will, of course, no longer hesitate to conduct us to the haunts of the rascals, that we may save the lieutenant."

"No, sir. I will not do that. You would not rescue him by such a proceeding. They would know of your approach,

and would kill him before you could get to him. I alone will save him if I can—if you will promise not to follow me."

Log hesitated, but Lucia laid her hand upon his arm.

"Give the promise, papa," she said, eagerly. "His life is worth any sacrifice."

"Well, I promise," said the captain.

"You have several canoes aboard; you must let me have one," continued Dot.

In fact, the Nautilus was well provided with means for navigating the shoals and narrow passages along the island coast. Log had had forethought enough to bring with him half a dozen small canoe shaped boats from Boston, judging that they would come in good use.

"Yes," he answered, "you are welcome to one."

"Please have it lowered alongside," said Dot.

"What! you do not intend starting at once?"

"Yes. If he is among the pirates there is no time to lose."

The night-shadows were now gathering, with the promise of a full moon. Log could see that the girl was anxious to get off before moonrise.

Descending the gangway, she stepped, as light as a fawn, into the little boat, which she was soon paddling away from the brig. Turning, she waved her hand to Lucia; the next moment they had disappeared round one of the rocks of the island bay.

About this time Watson lay still a prey to great anxiety of mind regarding the Clinton and the fate of his parents. Rondo had not yet reappeared; the young officer feared that he might not be permitted to see him again; that he would be executed out of sight of the pirate captain.

Alone in the cave, yet within sound of voices from another apartment, he shouted again and again, calling upon Rondo to come, as he had something to say to him.

Vain his cries. The hollow vault gave them back with echoes, or now and then a derisive burst of laughter was the only response.

Hour after hour passed. The lamp fastened in the wall began to grow dim for want of replenishing; the darkness round the prisoner deepened every moment.

Suddenly he fancied he saw a faint gleam of light ahead of him, for he had risen to a half-sitting posture. The light came from the end of a narrow corridor, which led into the cave. Soon it was darkened by a shadow, and he knew that some person was entering the corridor. This person glided swiftly forward, without noise, so that the form was, for a few minutes, right in range of the dim lamplight, when Watson discovered it was a female. As she came yet nearer, he recognized the face.

It was Dot!

"No noise," she whispered. "I guessed you were here, and have come to save you, if I can."

He would have answered, but she held up her finger.

"The slightest noise is redoubled in force in this hollow vault. Those in the other apartment would even hear my whisper, were they not talking themselves."

So saying, she stooped and examined the ropes attached to the ring-bolts. These she quickly severed with a small knife taken from her pocket.

"Rise, you are free," she continued.

At the same moment, heavy steps were heard approaching.

"No time to lose," added Dot. "Come!"

The young man obeyed, following the girl to the end of the corridor, whence he had seen the light shining. This light, he now discovered, came from the moon. Leading into the corridor, and just large enough to admit a human body, there was a small opening, which was usually concealed by a great stone covered with sea-weed, pushed against it. This, with the long masses of weeds drooping downward over it, served to effectually hide the entrance.

Crawling through the opening, the two stood upon a small strip of sand not more than a yard wide. It was washed by the waters of the sea; in fact, judging from appearances, the whole rock must be flooded at high tide.

Watson glanced round him, taking a careful survey of his situation. Standing upon the strip of sand as mentioned, he saw ahead of him numberless little rocks, among which the passages were too narrow to be entered by a boat larger than that which now lay alongside the beach—the small canoe in which Dot had come. The rock containing the cave was

shaped something like a whale's back, and being covered with sea-weed, its dark appearance must have added to the resemblance when seen at a distance. The front part seemed larger than the rest, which extended back a long distance parallel with the island beach, which, at this point, was thickly wooded. Sloping as it stretched away, a great portion of the rock was submerged in water, especially the further part, which, on this account, was not visible from the front.

As Watson still gazed, he could but admire the retreat which the pirates had chosen, as no person would have dreamed that a party of outlaws were hidden in that insignificant-looking rock among the shoals.

"Now, then," said Dot, blushing, as the lieutenant, after gazing his fill, turned his admiring eyes upon her sweet face, "now, then, you must permit me to blindfold you."

"And wherefore, my dear child?"

"Because I do not want you to know how to get here at any future time. I did not come to betray my father's haunt, but to save you."

The lieutenant shook his head.

"My duty will not allow me to submit to such a proceeding," he said, smiling. "It is my place to keep my eyes open; to do my best to discover the way to capture and rout the pirates."

"I believe you are right," said Dot, "but your obstinacy will render it necessary for me to get you to the brig by another way than I had intended. The canoe, also, will have to be sacrificed."

"Very well. The pirates, however, must not know that it has been here."

So saying, he pulled the light vessel up, so that Dot could easily enter it. Both stepped in, and the canoe was soon being paddled shoreward.

The shore, not more than eight fathoms from the rock, was soon reached. Watson then rolled several large pieces of rock into the frail vessel, which was thus carried out of sight to the bottom.

"Now follow me, sir," said the girl, as she moved into the locker.

Entering it, he found himself in total darkness; for the

moonlight could not penetrate through the broad palm-leaves and dense mazes of this grove. The fair guide was not in the least impeded by the gloom. Every nook, every path, every hollow in the woods seemed familiar to this girl, who continually warned the lieutenant as to the direction he should take.

It seemed to him as if they were hours walking through the woods. At times, the white hand of the girl, contrasting with the darkness, was his only guide, as she darted far ahead of him.

Thus having threaded the difficult mazes of such a thicket at night, the young man could not for his life have explained the direction taken, when, at length, from a rising point of land, the two came in sight of the brig lying in the bay.

"You will have to hail her when we get to the beach," said Dot.

"Very well," he answered, and away she went, not the least fatigued, her like form gliding on before him.

Soon the beach was reached, when the lieutenant hailed the brig, at the same time waving a kerchief as a signal.

A boat was lowered, and the two were soon taken aboard.

The first person to meet Watson was Lucia, who impulsively bounded toward him with a glad cry. He clasped her hands, pressing them with much warmth, then, turning to Dot, he said:

"Behold my rescuer. But for her, I should in a few hours have been at the bottom of the sea."

"Ay, ay, lad. God bless her for a noble girl!" cried Captain Log.

As he spoke, he "poked" Watson violently in the stomach, as if to assure himself that the young man was real flesh and blood.

The other officers gathered round, congratulating him.

"I suppose you took the bearings of the place?" said Log, after the lieutenant had explained.

"As well as I could. But as we came by way of the shore, I am afraid I could not find it, although I think I would know the cave-rock were I to see it again."

"We will have the boats down to-morrow, and see what we can do," said Captain Log.

"I am anxious to capture the pirate captain for more reasons than one," remarked Watson.

He then explained regarding the leaf of the log-book found in the cave.

"You may rest assured," remarked Log, "that Captain Rondo captured the Clinton, and with his fiendish crew murdered your parents."

"In case of a hand-to-hand combat, then," said Watson, his eyes flashing, "you must leave the taking of the rascal to me. I will capture him, if I can, with my own hand."

Dot, who had heard what was said, turned pale.

She advanced, and in a low voice thus addressed Captain Log:

"If you take my advice you will send no boats. If you do, I am afraid you will lose much life for nothing."

"And why think you so, my lass?" queried Log.

But Dot would not explain. "I can not betray my father," she said. "I can only give you good advice."

The captain, however, was not to be turned aside by the warning, which he attributed simply to the exaggerated fears natural to a young girl.

"How did you know where to go for Watson?" queried Lucia, now drawing the other aside.

"I know where prisoners are put by my father," she answered. "I also know their usual fate!"

At that moment the boatswain's whistle was heard, summoning all hands aft.

The captain read the names of the men written upon the slip of paper by Dick Swivel in compliance with Watson's demands. The lieutenant had carefully preserved the paper in an inside pocket, and had handed it to Log on boarding the brig.

"Men," said Captain Log, sternly, "I have ascertained that you are the traitors aboard. I would not have believed it but for this confession"—showing the paper—"of one of your accomplices."

The seamen thus accused looked from one to the other with surprise and dismay.

"Ay, you see you are found out. Not a word," he added, as one of the men, an old fellow, stepped forward, taking off

his hat, as if to say something. "I am not to be hoodwinked by any of your professions of honesty."

"Papa," said Lucia, gliding to her father's side as a tear actually glistened in the eyes of the rough old tar, who had advanced, "really I do not believe this man can be guilty."

"That's woman all over!" said Log, gruffly; "false colors easily deceive your sex. Here's his name in black and white."

He ordered the twenty men to be handcuffed and bundled into the run.

When this was done and the hatch was secured over them, he turned to Watson with a satisfied air.

"There, we've got rid of the traitors at last. We now know that all the rest of our crew are honest men. Pipe below, Mr. Warcroft," he added, to the second lieutenant.

CHAPTER VI.

PERIL.

NEXT morning Watson was early on deck, issuing his orders. Before the captain came up, an hour later, he had the cutter, the long-boat and several canoes alongside, ready to be manned for the expedition.

Log rubbed his hands and glanced round him.

"You've done well, sir. Better have the men get ready, after breakfast."

"The men have had breakfast, sir, nearly an hour earlier than usual, and are ready at any time."

"Ay, ay, that's well!" cried Log, poking his lieutenant, approvingly.

"I have interested motives in this matter," said Watson; "so you must not give me more credit than I deserve. That hint about the Clinton, on the piece of paper, has made me anxious to capture the pirate captain so as to question him about my parents."

"That's right—can understand your feelings perfectly, my lad. Better pipe aft."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

A moment later the shrill whistle was heard. The men came aft, where Log delivered a brief address, saying he hoped every man would do his duty, that day, in case of a meeting with the pirates.

The men cheered, and soon after they were in their places in the boats.

The first lieutenant was in command of the cutter, the captain had the long-boat, while the three canoes were under the orders of the second lieutenant and two midshipmen, who had been drafted from a frigate in Boston harbor to go on the cruise in the *Nautilus*.

The crews of the boats numbered fifty men in all, about forty having been left in charge of the brig. The boatmen were well armed with cutlasses, pikes and pistols, which became all the men except one. This exception was Tom Wick, the steward, a person more skilled in making pastry and puddings than in wielding the sword. This man was about forty-five years old, with a short body, very long legs, a long, mealy-looking face, and a large nose always red on one side and blue on the other.

Nobody had ever seen Tom Wick beat any thing except his dough, yet he was continually bragging how he had fought men much bigger than himself, and whipped them in just so many minutes. He would wind up such yarns by declaring that he was never made for a steward but for a naval warrior. That, had opportunity been favorable, he might have become a second Nelson. What would he not give for an occasion to distinguish himself and cover himself with glory instead of with that eternal flour, which he was obliged to mold into doughnuts, pies, cakes, and paste-balls.

"Ay, paste-balls!" he would exclaim, contemptuously, fanning his arms, frowning fiercely, and creaking his white canvas cap on one side of his head, "paste-balls! cannon-balls is Tom Wick's sphere!"

The men had become rather tired of hearing Wick's stories, but he still had an interested listener in "Waxy," a little pale watery-eyed cabin-boy with flaxen hair, who would sit watch

log him with open mouth, and rather stolid countenance, until the doughnuts, paste-balls, etc., were mentioned, when his face would light up with an interest truly edifying.

It happened that old Captain Log often overheard Wick's warlike declamations to the little youngster, wherefore he determined to give the steward, when opportunity should offer, the coveted chance for signalizing himself.

Hence he had told Wick, this very morning, that he might make one of the party for the boats.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir," said Wick, in his excitement rubbing the flour into his eyes, "but really, sir, you must have dinner when you return. So I don't see how I can go."

"Oh, the cook will attend to all that," answered Log, who was naturally very accommodating. "You can just instruct him. As to dinner, none of us may ever return for *that*, as these pirates, they say, are desperate fighters."

"Upon my word, sir, no cooks that ever I saw has my knack of making paste-balls. It's nat'ral, sir, entirely! I'm afraid the paste-balls wouldn't suit if the cook made 'em! Very sorry I can't go, as nothin' would please me better."

"Ay, ay, now, but you *shall* go!" cried the captain. "So get ready, at once!"

"Of course, I'm glad of it if *you* are willin' sir."

Soon after, Wick presented himself to the watery-eyed cabin-boy, with a huge cutlass and a brace of pistols at his side.

"I'm goin'," said he; "good-by. If I fall for glory," he added, trembling a little, "that 'ere pan of doughnuts and them lemon-pies in slices is for *you*!"

"Where? where?" inquired the little boy, eagerly, as he wiped away a tear.

But Wick was gone!

Now as Wick sat in the boat, his mealy face grew mealie! when the coxswain gave the command to pull ahead.

Lucia, standing by the side of Dot, who, like the other, looked pale and anxious, waved her handkerchief to her father and Watson until the boats, rounding the angles of the rocks in the bay, were out of sight.

As the vessels glided along shore, Watson scanned the rocks bordering it in a vain search for the one in which was the cave. At last, however, believing he had reached or was near

the place, he stepped into one of the canoes, heading a reconnoitering party. Forcing the light vessel among the shoals, he was suddenly seen to raise his hand to the captain as a signal that he had discovered the secret retreat.

Yes, he felt certain he had, for there was the very stone which Dot had removed the day before to let him out of the cavern.

Sneoping he now displaced the stone, to behold, as he had expected, the opening of the cave.

The captain, leaving a guard in the cutter, landed, by means of the canoes, the rest of his men on the strip of beach, and prepared to head them.

"If you please, sir, let me go first," whispered Watson. "Remember, I am interested."

"Not a bit of it, my lad!" answered Log, rather gruffly. "I always have headed my men, and I shall do so now!"

The men were soon arranged in single file for entering the retreat. Wick being the thinnest of the party, was to enter through the aperture the next after the officers.

When his turn came, he thrust his head through the opening, and there remained, half of his body in and the rest out, thus effectually blocking the entrance.

"Come," said the men behind him, gruffly. "What mean you by that, skipper? Go ahead!"

"I believe I'm sick," answered Wick. "I don't feel well."

"Well, out of the way, at any rate!"

Still Wick moved not, until, catching him by the legs, the men behind him pulled him out of the way.

"Oh!" groaned the steward, putting a hand upon his stomach, "what can be the matter with me?"

Along came the doctor. He examined the steward and grinned.

"The man is perfectly fit for duty in every respect but one," said he.

"And that?" queried a midshipman.

"He has the bullet-fever. A few lead pills will cure him!"

At this there was a suppressed laugh, notwithstanding the command of "silence."

All the men, with the exception of the steward, soon were in the passage-way. Forward they glided, cutlasses and pistols ready, led by old Captain Log.

A brief examination of the cave, however, soon convinced them that the freebooters had deserted the premises. Rondo, his alarm probably excited by the escape of the lieutenant, had quitted the retreat during the night, taking with him every article of value in the cavern. Two minutes after this fact was made known, along came Wick, now looking truly formidable with his drawn cutlass and pistol, a hand upon the trigger.

"Where are them cutthroats!" he roared. "I'm with yer shipmates!"

"Just come?" inquired Log, with a grim smile. "I thought you were sick?"

"So I was. But I have a will which helps me through all things!"

"Perhaps we may have a chance to try it," said the captain.

At the same moment a roaring, rushing sound was heard, apparently in the further extremity of the cave, glancing in which direction the whole party now beheld the water descending in sheets, with a velocity which must soon fill the cavern: in fact, so rapidly swelled the advancing surge, that Log doubted they could all effect their escape from the cave.

"A cunning device of the rascals," said the doctor. "You may see by the way the water descends, that a hole has been opened in the top of the rock. It is my belief that there was a plug of some kind in it, which the wretches have now pulled out in order to drown us all!"

As he spoke, the ends of a pair of long legs were for an instant seen through the entrance of the cavern, as they were drawn through to the outside.

"There goes Wick!" cried a midshipman.

"We had better go too!" exclaimed Log.

In fact, it was high time, as the water was rapidly deepening, being already up to the knees of the sailors.

They moved to the entrance, through which they could only pass one by one.

"Lively, men, lively!" shrieked Log, as one portly fellow squeezed himself through the opening.

The others imitated his example as speedily as possible, but there was a long file of men to get through the place.

By the time half of the party were outside, the water had gained fearfully, being up to the middle of all those within the cave.

So great was the slope of the passage-way that the water must flow over the head of the tallest man before it could find an outlet through the aperture.

When the last man but three had gone through, the water was up to the necks of those remaining: the captain, Watson and the midshipman.

The latter was prevailed upon to go next; then Log stood by for Watson to pass.

"No, you go first, sir," said the young man.

"If I do, my name isn't Log," answered the other, firmly "Come, make a start, sir!"

Watson glanced quickly round him. He perceived there was not a minute to spare, that the moment he should go through the aperture, the water must sweep over the captain's head.

"No, sir," said he. "You know you always lead your men. Therefore excuse me, if, for the first time, I disobey orders!"

"I lead my men to an enemy," answered Log, "but not from one!"

"I will not budge," said Watson, "unless you go first."

"I will have you court-martialed, sir, for this!"

The captain spoke sternly, but it was plain he would not think of carrying out his threat.

Meanwhile the water was now nearly to the mouths of both men, who were obliged to cling to the rugged side of the cavern to keep from being washed from their feet. Captain Log was the shorter of the two; he soon heard the water lapping in his ears, while it had scarcely reached Watson's under lip.

"I must save you, sir!" cried the young man.

With an effort of strength and activity, Log was unable to withstand, the latter caught the old fellow and thrust his head and shoulders through the opening, so that those in waiting outside could easily draw him to them.

The next moment, just as Log was safely pulled out on *terra firma*, Watson felt himself lifted off his feet by the water. He threw out his arms, grasping the side of the passage, and

drawing himself along to the opening. By the time he reached it, the tide, with a rush, poured over his head, which, as he was lifted, came into contact with the top of the cave.

Thus the young man was scarcely able to breathe, for his mouth and almost his nostrils were immersed. Soon the latter were submerged. A sense of suffocation was felt by the imperiled sailor. His brain whirled, while his lungs seemed as if ready to burst with the strain upon them.

Mechanically, however he threw out his arms, hoping he was near enough to the entrance of the cave for his hands to be grasped.

Vain hope! he was still some distance from his friends, who were vainly endeavoring to devise some means for his safety.

Roaring and gurgling, the merciless waters came on. Watson seemed to behold thousands of little points of light dancing before him. These soon grew less luminous, apparently veiled by a thick mist, when the young man felt that he was dying.

Thus to die right within sound of his shipmates' voices was fearful.

Again he threw out his arms, but now they only came in contact with the roof of the cave, which, by this time, the water had nearly attained. Darker and darker grew everything before the sufferer's vision. He fancied he could hear a strange humming as of myriads of locusts, around him. It was the knell of hope! the surging of the water pouring into his ears! Unable longer to keep his lips closed, the salt water poured down his throat! He was now strangling—his gurgling gasps were making bubbles in the water: darkness—black darkness was now around him.

He gave all up as lost, all consciousness was leaving him, when, suddenly, he was swiftly borne forward; a noise like thunder broke upon him, and swift as a shot, he felt himself whirled forward!

Then there was a sensation of relief. Pure air rushed into his nostrils: gradually full sense dawned upon him, and he opened his eyes, to find himself in one of the canoes, with Log bending over him, and the doctor holding a flask of brandy between his lips.

He soon learned that he had been saved by being thrown

with the water, which, when it had attained a height above the aperture, had rushed through it, upon the sand outside.

This outward rush had been accelerated by the movements of Log and his party, who had knocked away with hatchets the lower side of the aperture in time to save the young man's life.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SCHOONER.

THE rescued lieutenant now rose, and glanced round him, to perceive that every vestige, with the exception of the forward part of the cave-rock, had disappeared. Log informed him that the water, rushing through the opening, had overflowed the strip of sand in front of it in about five minutes.

From the cutter's crew, who had been left outside as a guard when the adventurers entered the cave, the captain had learned that, shortly after the entrance was effected, a canoe, containing a couple of men, had shot out from the land, and approached the rock.

The midshipman in charge of the guard, supposing that the two men, who had the appearance of poor fisherman, wanted to speak to him, had waited, in anticipation of their coming up.

When within fifty yards of the cutter, however, the men suddenly stopped paddling, right over the top of the rock, when one of them immediately lifting a large hammer, struck something, probably a plug. That it was a plug which had been driven through the rock by the blow, was evident when, with a rush and a roar, the water was seen forming a whirlpool, as if pouring into a funnel, above the spot.

Having executed their intention, the two men now paddled off toward the shore, heedless of the hails of the midshipman, who, unfortunately, could not follow them in time to overtake the fugitives, as the canoes were not close enough for that purpose, Log having left them near the mouth of the cave.

No longer having reason to doubt that the two men were

of the pirate party, the young officer ordered several shots fired at them, hoping these would stop their progress.

With derisive laughter, the men kept on and reached the shore in safety, where, leaving the canoe, they vanished in the thick underbrush!

"It was a cunning trick of the rascals," continued Log "the boring of a hole in the top of the rock and then plugging it up; all done with a view to entrapping any large party which should enter the cave to attack them."

"Of course," said Watson, "the fellows must have some kind of a vessel near this place. Have you seen nothing of it?"

"Nothing; but thinking as you do, I have concluded to cruise along shore in our boats, hoping that we may fall in with that vessel, which is probably concealed in some one of the small bays on the coast."

Accordingly the canoes and boats were soon manned, and pulling out far enough to give the rocks and shoals a wide berth, Log and his party were soon heading in toward the shore.

They had not proceeded far on this course, when there was an exclamation from one of the midshipmen as he pointed ahead!

Glancing thither, the whole party beheld an unexpected sight: a large, beautifully-modeled topsail schooner, with every stitch of canvas set, shooting out apparently from the very branches of the thick trees fringing the shore.

A beautiful craft she was, with a remarkably low, elegantly-modeled hull, painted *white* excepting a red stripe extending fore and aft, and spars tall, tapering and rakish, slushed and scraped so neatly that they fairly shone in the sunlight. The sails of this vessel were rather broad for her size, while there were more of them than are usually carried by a schooner. In addition to her mainsail, gaff topsail, and her topsails forward, she carried as many as *five stay-sails*, all tapering off toward the tops of her masts, while under her jib-boom a huge *water-sail* almost swept the surface of the sea.

For several moments the seamen remained dumb with admiration at sight of this beautiful vision, like a fairy picture suddenly shooting out from the bosom of the foliage; then

the voice of Captain Log rolled like thunder over the water :

"Pull—pull ahead!"

"Hooray! Hooray!" responded the men.

A red gleam from the rising sun slantingly rested athwart the sea, breaking through a soft, purple mist, which had rolled down from the mountains and was slowly sailing along over the water. Softened by this mist, the beautiful schooner, skimming along like a bird, caught the full glory of the red sun gleam upon her, so that miniature rainbows, of red, blue and white, seemed to encircle the tops of her masts and the ends of her booms.

Away she went, speeding seaward with a rapidity which soon left the boats far astern of her.

"Now for the brig!" ordered Log. "Pull like tigers, every man!"

The boats were quickly whirled round, to head for the vessel, some of their men wondering why the schooner's people had not fired upon them. Others, however, inferred that it was because the pirates did not wish, by the noise of their guns, to attract the attention of the brig, which, in case her crew heard the report, they feared would at once weigh anchor, and start in pursuit of them.

"What is it?" inquired Log, noticing that the coxswain was apparently counting the boat's crew.

"Nothing, sir; only I was wondering what had become of Tom Wick."

"Why, yes! Where is the man? I can't afford to lose my steward."

He gave the coxswain such a poke in the stomach, as he said this, that the man could not help responding, with the liberty of an old favorite:

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, if you ain't careful you'll lose me, too."

"Has anybody seen the steward?" inquired the captain, in a loud voice.

There was no response. In fact, everybody had been so taken up with more important matters than Wick, since his escape from the cave, had not even been noticed.

"I'm afraid he's gone," said Log, turning to Watson. "This

sir, is a great loss. There's not a man among my crew, I believe, that could make such paste-balls as Wick always prepared for me."

"He may have been drowned," said the lieutenant. "I believe Wick was not much of a swimmer."

"We must get back to the shoals and look for him," said the captain.

In a quarter of an hour the boats were within a few fathoms of the shoals.

"Keep a sharp look-out," was now the order, when up rose the old coxswain, pointing ahead.

"I don't see nothin' of Wick," said he, "but, bless my eyes, sir, there's a queerity there among them rocks!"

All hands looking in the indicated direction, beheld something white, protruding above a heap of small rocks, covered with sea-weed.

"Ay, ay, now," said Captain Log, "that's the strangest thing I ever squinted at. Looks like a white sea-fish, of some kind, stranded."

"I think I see it move!" said Watson.

"Ay, ay, sir," said the coxswain, "it's a-movin' slow-like, as if frightened by the sound of the boats."

Log unslung his glass and leveled it.

"Can't make it out yet," said he.

"P'raps," respectfully suggested the coxswain, "it's a turtle."

"I never saw a *white* turtle," said Log.

The whole crew were puzzled to make out the strange apparition. As the boat rapidly approached the shoals, however, their curiosity must soon be gratified. In five minutes the boat was within about fifteen fathoms of the spot.

The captain, with Watson, sprung upon a rock, and making stepping-stones of other rocks, they started toward the thing, which was still visible.

"May I go with you, sir?" respectfully inquired the coxswain.

"Yea."

The man jumped out of the boat, and as the three approached the singular protuberance, an expression of intelligence gradually overspread his brown face.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said, with a grim smile, addressing the captain, "I believe it's Wick's *sphere*."

"What do you mean?" inquired the captain; but a more graphic answer to the query than the coxswain could have given was now afforded him.

In fact, just as he spoke, he beheld the white object rise higher, thus showing that it was the most protuberant portion of a human body, that body belonging to Wick, who now rose upright from among the rocks, where he had been crouching on his knees, with his nose thrust in the sea-weed.

"What are you doing there?" inquired the captain.

"The truth is," said Wick, "I was looking for muscles!"

He cast a startled glance around him as he spoke, and trembled in every limb.

"The truth is," answered Log, somewhat sternly, "that you'd better look for your *own* muscle! You have been here, I dare say half frightened to death, ever since you left the cave."

"Show me the pirates, sir, and you shall see!" said Wick glaring down at his cutlass.

Log turned aside to hide a smile, for Wick's cutlass was bent nearly double from the recumbent position he had so long occupied.

"Never mind, Wick," said he, "but just jump into this boat and get aboard, among your paste-balls, as soon as possible."

All were soon in the boat, whose occupants had been laughing heartily at the queer *signal* which had led to Wick's discovery.

The boat was soon alongside the brig, aboard which Lucia and Dot had been anxiously awaiting the reappearance of the party, which, owing to the location of the Nautilus, they had been unable to watch.

"Safe and well, my old papa! I am so glad!" cried Lucia.

Then, with alarm, she noticed the saturated, muddy appearance of Watson's uniform.

Log explained the young man's adventure, which was heard with interest by both Lucia and Dot.

"All that about making a hole in the rock and plugging

it must have been done without my knowledge," said the latter.

Lucia noticed a look of tender interest in the speaker's eye, every time she was glanced at by Watson.

The lieutenant went below to change his uniform, while the captain issued instant orders for the getting up of the anchor. The schooner was not visible, owing to the jutting of the rock at the end of the bay, and Log was all impatience to get sight of her.

Meanwhile the steward had slouched through the companion, there to encounter the little watery-eyed cabin-boy, who uttered a shrill cry, and burst into tears at sight of him.

"Don't grieve," said Wick, drawing himself up, and folding his arms, "I'm fresh from paths of glory, but I ain't hurt!"

"It wasn't that," said the boy, "but the pie and them doughnuts is now lost!"

So saying, he slunk away, leaving Wick to commence upon the paste-balls.

On deck the men were now rapidly heaving up the anchor, which was soon clear. Topsails were then sheeted home, and the wheel manned, when away went the brig, gliding out of the bay with a favorable land-breeze.

The captain had all sail loosened and the vessel headed for the chase, visible about a league ahead. The brig was a fast sailer, not matched for speed by any vessel out of Boston, and as she skimmed along, with the foam flying over her bows, Log felt justly proud of his craft.

Soon it was evident to all aboard that the brig, owing to her greater quantity of canvas, gained upon the schooner.

The latter vessel, perhaps for this reason, although Log could not comprehend her captain's purpose, was headed for the coast, on a course at right angles with the way the brig was now heading.

"I have it," said Log, suddenly. "I believe the fellow intends to beach his vessel, and burn her, so that she may not fall into our hands."

In fact, this was the opinion of the majority of the officers.

Among the spectators, Dot certainly was not the least

interested. There she stood by the rail, a warm color upon her cheeks, her eyes glowing, while her brown curls waved upon the breeze.

Lucia, by her side, had been watching, for some time, the emotion of the young girl, when a sudden and not unpleasant thought occurred to her mind.

"You have a lover aboard that vessel, if I am not mistaken," she said, smiling.

Dot laughed, and shook her head.

"I believe you are something of a wizard," said she, "although in *this* you are not *exactly* right."

"Still you acknowledge I am partly so?"

"Yes. The first lieutenant aboard that vessel wants to marry me against my will, and my father half favors him."

"Perhaps another favors him also?"

"No," answered Dot, with unmistakable firmness, "I do not even like the man. One reason for my wishing to remain here was to get rid of *him*."

An hour later the two vessels were scarcely half a league apart, the schooner heading straight for a gigantic rock fronting a number of lesser rocks, and which was full of shoals.

"This is madness!" cried Log—"a man to be willing to dash his vessel up against a rock while under full sail. He risks the lives of all hands aboard his vessel."

"I do not think he intends doing that," said Watson. "Certainly not unless he is crazy."

"What then?"

"He will probably tack soon."

"He is already too near to tack," said Log. "Don't you think so, sailing-master?"

"No, sir," answered Mr. Barchell, "I do not, judging by the vessel's speed. Still, that is a hard question to answer."

Meanwhile the schooner kept steadily on.

"My God! she will strike!" screamed the captain, in his excitement springing upon the rail.

His companions also sprung up at his side. The schooner was frightfully near the rock, now rising like a black rampart, less than *eight fathoms* ahead!

"*There she goes!*" shrieked Log. "God keep her!"

But the vessel did not strike. With a sudden swoop to leeward she kept off; then was seen booming along, as if alive and bearing a charmed existence, apparently **RIGHT AMONG THE SHOALS!**

CHAPTER VIII.

STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE.

For several minutes Captain Log and his companions stood surveying the schooner with looks of surprise and admiration, at the daring manner in which the beautiful vessel had been directed among those shoals.

"Ay, ay, one thing is certain," said Log: "we can't follow her there!"

"No, we draw too much water; and besides, even if we did not, we could not thread the narrow channels among those rocks. It is plain those fellows are acquainted with every strip of water in these parts!"

"That's so, sailing-master! We will, however, see if we can't cripple her, so as to board with the boats, before she gets out of range."

Accordingly an eight-pounder forward was pointed and fired, when a rock near the schooner was seen flying to pieces.

Then the vessel's rails were crowded with men in dark shirts and glazed hats, waving their hands and shouting acerbively.

Another shot was fired, this time with better effect. Down went the schooner's jib, shot away, trailing in the water.

Five minutes after, so rapid were the movements of the trained seamen, the sail was hauled aboard, and another being bent on. At the same time the schooner, careering to one side, shot ahead with a graceful sweep, so that in a few minutes she was out of range behind a lofty rock rising like a **cone near the coast.**

When the craft again reappeared, there she was, dancing

away, about a league distant, vanishing behind a protruding headland.

Meanwhile Captain Log conned his own vessel admirably, keeping outside of the line of shoals, and yet as near them as possible, with a leadsman constantly in the chains.

Both vessels were now running on a course parallel with the coast, Log hoping to intercept the schooner when she could come out of the shoals, and pay her for the trick she had served him.

Unfortunately, there were so many rocks encountered in the path of the Nautilus, which, for this reason, was almost constantly being kept off or luffed up, that a great deal of time was lost, thus giving the schooner a decided advantage, her captain's knowledge of the coast enabling him to keep on a more direct line.

About noon the smaller vessel was seen some four miles ahead, again shooting out toward the open sea.

"Now is our time!" said Captain Log.

He crowded every thing, and was soon heading straight for the other craft, in full chase.

Toward this a heavy fog-bank, which for some time had been observed on the verge of the horizon, was seen advancing. In a short time it completely screened the schooner from her pursuer.

A change of wind followed, compelling Log to brace up sharp; it continued then until about four P. M., when it freshened to a gale. The captain kept his top-gallant-sails set until his cracking spars warned him, when he gave the word for piping to furl them. The canvas was being taken in, when one of the men on the main top-gallant yard sung out:

"Sail 'O!"

"Whereaway?" was the query, to which he answered:

"Three points abaft the beam."

"Ay, ay," growled Log; "the fellow thought he'd creep away from me, and thus serve me another trick, but I'll soon have him now."

Pointing his glass to make sure that the craft sighted was the schooner, he refused to have any more sail taken in, notwithstanding Mr. Barchell's repeated warning.

The chase had only taken in her top-gallant-sails, and he could stand as much canvas as she.

The Nautilus was soon booming through the water at the rate of ten knots, with the foam roaring round her bows, while the schooner, now about a league ahead, was seen skimming along through the line of white, flying drifts, almost on her beam-ends.

Lucia and Dot were still on the brig's deck, interested spectators, when Lieutenant Watson, not far off, stood watching the schooner with his glass.

"We gain on her," remarked Lucia to her companion "She will be our prize before long."

Dot smiled, a little sadly.

"I think not," said she. "I have been aboard that schooner, and I know she sails like the wind. Besides, sooner than have her fall into your hands, my father would sink her to the bottom."

As she spoke, a singular phenomenon occurred.

The wind, which hitherto had been blowing steadily, since it changed, suddenly sunk away to a light breeze; then a calm, appalling from its strange suddenness, followed.

The seas, which had been rolling and breaking roughly about, now were merged into those lazy, stealthy swells, which, flecked here and there with shadowy lines, wind along with so many black serpents creeping through the water.

The sailing-master, the captain and the lieutenant exchanged meaning glances, while the old coxswain forward was observed standing with his head so far sideways that it almost touched his shoulder, a habit with him when he was anticipating any thing peculiar.

Log sprung to the companion, and glancing at the barometer, reported that it was falling rapidly.

Meanwhile the sun had assumed a murky, reddish tint, and was surrounded by a halo. Hovering far westward between the gathering clouds, it shed faint lines of light upon the water, whose appearance of blended black and crimson was singularly impressive.

The canvas now began to shake; the brig, pitching and rolling heavily, seemed to nod a dreary warning to the sailors. Far away, the schooner's white hull, now and then turned up

toward the crimson light, contrasted with the dark waters and the clouds gathering overhead. These clouds were tinged with yellow, and seemed rolling slantingly downward, volume upon volume.

"We are going to have a screamer," said Log. "Pipe to furl, Mr. Watson."

The shrill whistle pierced all ears. Up sprung the lively tars, darting out upon yards and booms to roll up canvas.

The topsails were all taken in except a close-reefed main-topsail and staysail. The fly-jib and jib were furled, also the foresail and the mainsail.

A roar like a lion's was now heard. Far along the horizon, east, west and north, the red flashes of light were seen lighting up sea and sky with ghastly gleam. The sun was buried among deep clouds, and darkness gathered. Then, under one of the bellying clouds, the water was seen flying up in long sheets of spray, the roaring grew louder, whole flocks of screaming birds were observed careering along in terrified flight away from that white line to windward, while above them the clouds crossed, recrossed, and whirled round and round.

"Now, then, we'll soon have it," growled Captain Log, as a whitish cloud-funnel passed over the brig's mainmast. "Mind yourself—at—that—wheel!"

A booming, snapping, cracking sound was heard.

Striking and roaring, and lashing the water into clouds and whirlpools of foam, the tempest pounced upon the brig.

Thrown upon her beam-ends, her lee-rail completely buried, the white water bubbling, boiling and bursting around her, her timbers humming thunder, away she went closely shrouded in the spray, rack and mist of the storm.

But for Log's having taken the precaution to batter down his hatches, the brig must soon have been swamped, for at times she was completely buried.

The girls were now gone into the cabin, as it was dangerous even for the seamen on deck, but Dot soon ventured up the companion-steps and peeped through the bars of the closed door.

For about a quarter of an hour she could see nothing of the decks or the rail, both being completely submerged, the

officers, clinging to ropes and belaying-pins, standing up to their knees in the water.

At length the vessel righted a little, as she was kept off right before the screaming blast.

"Do you see the schooner?" howled Log through his trumpet in the ear of his lieutenant, who stood near the weather-rail.

"Ay, ay, sir. There she is!" answered the lieutenant, pointing through the driving rack and spray of the storm, which now covered the whole vast expanse of ocean like a flying mist.

Log looked to leeward, and could just make out the vessel's white hull, which, with her solitary mainsail, resembled a white, moving column flying along with inconceivable rapidity, through the haze.

For about an hour the tempest raged with unabated violence; then, having a little subsided, although the gale was still howling with unabated fury, a plainer view could be obtained from the quarter-deck of the Nautilus.

The schooner, about four miles ahead, was seen standing along, her two masts just visible rising like white lines.

"Set a double-reefed mainsail!" ordered Log.

This was done, adding much to the speed of the brig, which now gained upon the schooner.

Soon almost the whole of the two masts could be seen.

While watching them, the officers of the brig saw the sun reappear on the western verge of the horizon, between interstices in the clouds, which covered its surface like black bars. The blood-red gleam, streaming along the dark waters, now lighted an object which had just become visible, rising above the surface of the sea, about two points off the weather-bow, apparently at the distance of a mile.

This was nothing less than the apparition which had previously so excited the astonishment of the spectators: the SPECTER SKIPPER again looming from the sea, his speaking-trumpet held aloft as on the former occasion. There he was, towering up, the red light falling full upon his white habiliments as he leaned forward, his feet in the ocean!

Only for a moment was he seen, the next he vanished as suddenly as he had come!

A murmur of superstitious awe now was heard forward

among the men. It was said that the apparition foreboded evil.

The officers, while scouting this idea, were baffled to account for the strange vision, which they could not lay to atmospheric causes.

"One thing is certain!" said Log, as the officers exchanged their comments, "be it ghost or devil, it shall not turn me from my purpose of capturing that schooner!"

Lieutenant Watson heartily echoed this sentiment. He was burning with impatience to capture the commander of the outlaws that he might exact from him the coveted information regarding the Clinton and his parents.

While thoughts on this subject were passing through his mind, a midshipman came up touching his cap.

"The boatswain tells me that the men would like to speak to the captain!"

Watson carried the word to Log, who immediately had the men summoned aft.

The old coxswain acted as spokesman.

"For my part," said he, "I ain't particular *sensible* (sensitive) regardin' sprites and t'other creatur's! Sartin it is, sir, we've seen 'em, but blast me if I'd care as far as myself is concerned, and—"

"To the point, Bill, at once."

"The long and short of it is, them chaps!" pointing at the men, "has conditioned me to request you to give up the chase, as no good—that's what them lubbers themselves say—can come of it after such a warnin' as that of the SPECTER SKIPPER!"

"Ay, ay!" exclaimed Log, giving the coxswain a poke in the ribs, which sent him back to the line making a grimace—"understand, now, that if I knew the brig would go to the bottom the next minute, I'd keep on after that schooner. Pipe forward, boatswain!"

The men went forward, many of them looking sullen and discontented. What was Log's surprise, a minute after, to see his grim old coxswain, usually a sober man, dancing a hornpipe on a gun-slide!

"Send that man aft!" he ordered, and was promptly obeyed.

"What's the matter with you, Bill? Are you drunk?"

"I never drink more than my taut, sir. Beggin' your

pardon, sir, I'll drink six or a dozen for that matter, if you'll stand treat."

"Answer my question!" said Log, with pretended sternness.

"Well, sir, I ain't drunk; but the truth is, I didn't want you to think that I went with them lubbers; so I was a-showin' it by dancin' approval do you see?"

"All right, Bill; tumble forward, and behave yourself. But after this remember I understand you without your dancing about like a frog."

As the coxswain walked forward, a murmur of surprise was heard throughout the brig.

"What is it?" queried Log.

"*The schooner has disappeared,*" said Lieutenant Watson.

"What?"

He looked through his glass, where the schooner's masts had been, but these were no longer visible!

"Aloft, there! Do you see the schooner?"

"No, sir! She is gone!"

It was true. The vessel had disappeared with strange suddenness!

CHAPTER IX.

SAIL 'O!

HAVING assured himself beyond doubt of the disappearance of the schooner, Log glanced at his lieutenant with blank countenance.

"We have lost one prize!" said he; "there can be but one explanation of this strange disappearance. *The schooner has foundered!*"

"So I think," said Watson.

He spoke in a low voice, glancing toward Dot, who had now come on deck. The young girl, however, had heard the news; yet there was nothing in her expression to betoken the anguish with which one might have supposed the catastrophe would naturally have inspired her. True, she looked pale and

her lips were tightly compressed, but there was a strange calmness in every feature.

After Log and the young man had talked over the matter Watson advanced to Dot's side, touching his cap.

"You must try to bear this misfortune with fortitude," said he. "Although the man was an outlaw, still he was a father to you."

A deep blush overspread the girl's face.

"Yes, he was my father!"

That was all she seemed to care to say upon the subject of the disappearance. In fact, as if anxious to avoid further remark, she turned and walked into the cabin.

Log and Watson now held a consultation.

"That band," said the captain, "is gone, but of course, there must be others along the coast, and it is now our duty to hunt for them. First we will make for the spot where the schooner went down, to see if we can pick up any remains of the vessel."

In about half an hour the locality where it was judged the vessel had gone down was reached. There were found several barrels, boxes, pails, and an overturned boat, which were supposed to have come from the schooner.

"So these are all the remains of that beautiful craft," said Log, who, it seemed, would never recover from his disappointment at not having captured the prize.

Darkness now was gathering. Log braced his yards, resolving to lay off and on the coast until daylight and then proceed to the eastward along the island to search for the haunts of other piratical bands.

Lieutenant Watson had the first watch. As he paced the deck the fair face of Dot kept intruding upon his mind. There was something about this girl which produced upon him a singular impression. Not at all conceited, he had not even noticed Lucia's jealousy, which, had he observed it, he would have deemed causeless. The feeling excited by Dot was entirely different from that which Lucia had roused within him.

There had been something mysterious about the behavior of the pirate's daughter when she learned that her father's craft had disappeared.

Watson thought of this, and vainly endeavored to arrive at some conclusion.

While he was still musing thus, he thought he could distinguish the outlines of a shadowy object moving past the Nautilus far ahead. He sprung forward ; but if he had really seen any thing, it had now disappeared in the darker shadows beyond where he had sighted it.

"Why didn't you sing out for that sail?" he inquired of the man on the look-out. "Hope you were not asleep."

"No, sir," answered the man. "Tom Banks never goes asleep on the look-out. Had there been a sail, I should have sung out for it."

"I am sure I saw something."

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, your fancy must have deceived you. I saw nothing, although I was keeping a good watch."

Watson now questioned several other men who were hanging about the bows, but none of them had seen a sail, or any thing like one.

"I must then have been deceived by a column of mist gliding past the ship," thought Watson, as he returned aft.

As hinted, the darkness, save aboard the Nautilus, where it was relieved by a couple of lanterns hung up in the fore and mizzen rigging, was intense. The wind was still blowing freshly, with a chopping sea that kept masts and yards jerking and cracking.

Watson had many things to think of now, as he paced the deck. Buried in reflection, he was, however, suddenly roused by a wild cry from forward.

"What is it?" he inquired, darting in that direction.

Now he at once ascertained the cause of the cry, for, looming large and white through the darkness, with the light of the lantern streaming upon it as the brig dashed past, was the SPECTER SKIPPER, his trumpet held up in the usual warning manner!

"Back the main yard! Stand by to lower!" shouted the young man. "I must solve the mystery of this strange vision!"

Even as he spoke, a low, moaning, unearthly sound, like that of some weird being in distress, was heard, apparently humming through the air all around the seamen's heads.

Motionless stood every man, with startled glance looking around him, until the voice of Watson again burst upon all ears :

“ Lively ! lively with the boats ! ”

The red glare of the lanterns flashed upon the forms and faces of the men as they sprung to the boat ; at the same moment the SPECTER SKIPPER was seen to vanish beneath the waters ! ”

Leaning far over the rail as the brig luffed up, so that her lanterns’ light again flashed upon the spot where the vision had disappeared, Watson looked for it in vain.

There was nothing there now but the dark, foam-tipped waters, clashing together with a sullen roar !

The lieutenant braced forward and kept the vessel bowling along, close hauled.

At daylight, Watson again had the watch. Scarcely had he come on deck, when the cry, “ Sail ’O ! ” was borne down from aloft.

“ Whereaway ? ”

“ Right astern, close in shore ! ”

Watson seized his glass, and examining the sail, discovered, to his astonishment, that it was the schooner—the same vessel which had disappeared on the day before, and had been supposed to be lost !

CHAPTER X

IN THE BOATS.

At first the young man could scarcely believe his senses. He mounted aloft to make sure he was not deceived, and examined the sail closely.

Yes, there could be no mistake ; it was really the schooner.

He called the captain, who, at a glance, was convinced that the vessel was the same.

Shaking his head he turned to his lieutenant, remarking that one would almost suppose the pirate to be a magic craft.

Watson then mentioned his thinking he saw a sail during the night, and his suspicion now that this was the one.

"Of course," answered Log. "As to the look-out not singing out for it, what can you expect of a crew picked in such a hurry? Blast me if I ever commit such a blunder again!"

The puzzled officers now endeavored to account for the strange phenomenon of the disappearance. All their efforts were vain.

Then the reappearance of the Specter Skipper was discussed.

"One would almost think we were in ghostly realms!" said Mr. Burchell, half laughing.

"Ghostly or not," remarked Log, "I'll try that schooner with a nine-pound shot."

The gun was pointed and fired, when the main-top-gallant-mast was seen flying to splinters.

Alarmed by the report, Dot now came on deck.

"You had better go below, miss," said the captain. "But first, can you explain how it is that your father's vessel disappears one moment and reappears the next?"

Dot shook her head.

"You may find out, some time," she said; "but *I* will not divulge my father's secrets."

She glanced, as she spoke, anxiously toward the schooner.

"I see how it is," she said. "You would not have seen that craft this morning but for the change of wind. It was my father's intention to run in shore out of sight, but the change of wind prevented him."

The schooner was now seen to veer round and shoot like a bird, close hauled, away from the shore, at right-angles with the Nautilus.

Shot after shot was discharged at her, but owing to the chopping sea, which rendered the aim uncertain every time, but little damage was done.

Meanwhile it was discovered that on a wind, the schooner, in point of sailing, had the advantage of the brig. She widened, every moment, the distance between her and the war-vessel.

"At this rate," growled Captain Log, "we will have a poor

report to make to Commodore Porter. The schooner beats us!"

A moment later his face lighted up.

"The wind is going down, sir. We shall have a calm—eh, sailing-master?"

"Ay, ay, sir, I believe you are right," answered Mr. Burchell.

At these words both Lucia and Dot, who were now on deck, turned pale.

"There will be fighting," said the former, glancing anxiously toward Watson.

"You fear for him," said Dot, half smiling; "so do I."

"You?"

"Yes; but it is not because I feel toward him as you do."

"Oh, of course not," answered Lucia, perhaps a little scornfully.

"No; and yet," she added, frankly, "I like him very much. He is a noble, good young man."

"That is true."

"One can not help feeling anxious for a man like this one especially when, with his goodness, he is brave almost to rashness."

"Do you think your father's men will make much resistance?"

"Yes," answered Dot, "*I know they will!*"

"Then God help Lieutenant Watson!"

As she spoke, Lucia glanced forward, when it struck her that most of the men did not show the same eagerness to capture the schooner as was evinced on the quarter-deck. On the contrary, she could not help remarking a certain air of sullenness on many faces, and also that group of sailors conversing in low tones, would frequently glance aft.

The wind continued dying away, and in the afternoon, by which time the schooner was about a league ahead, a dead calm fell upon the sea.

"Pipe the men aft!" ordered Log.

This was done. The seamen, all brown, sturdy-looking fellows, were ranged on the lee-side of the deck.

"I want volunteers to attack the schooner in the boats," said Log, briefly.

Among some of the men, quick glances only were exchanged.

About forty men stepped promptly forth, their resolute air showing that they entered, heart and soul, into the captain's plans.

"That's well," said Log.

Then he informed the rest—about the same number—that they would be left aboard under the sailing-master, as ship-keepers.

These men tried to look disappointed, but Log was not to be deceived.

In his heart he set them down as cowards, and looked keenly at each, so as to stamp every face upon his mind.

The men were then sent forward, the volunteers with orders to get dinner and be ready at a moment's warning to man the boats.

Just then, along came the steward, Tom Wick.

"Captain," said he, touching his cap, "if there's fighting to be done, I should like to take my part."

"I will have a wooden man made, and throw it overboard for you to shoot at," said the captain.

"Please, sir, don't joke. I should like to go, to cover myself with *creditableness*!"

"Better cover yourself with paste-ball flour. How goes the dinner?"

"Almost ready, sir."

"Then down with you and attend to it. After that you may go into my boat, *which is to take the lead*, and which will probably receive *the first fire*!"

The steward, glancing at the two girls, drew himself up with an air of bravado.

"Very well, it shall be so. I am ready to die in the line of duty."

So saying, he went into the cabin.

After dinner, when the boats were all ready to be manned, and the pipe was given, the steward was missing. Search was made for him, but in vain.

The boats were manned, the men, well armed, took their places, the word to give way was heard, and the vessels dashed off in the direction of the schooner.

So clear was the water that the seamen, as they pulled at their oars, could see their forms and faces reflected as in a mirror. Resting upon the limpid surface in the distance, the beautiful white hull of the schooner seemed elevated above the surface of the sea.

Her guns on one side, three in number, were now visible, their brass, polished muzzles shining in the sun with a cruel gleam. Above, the snow-white sails, hanging from the yards, lay motionless and flat against the masts, with not a breath of air to stir them.

An ominous silence reigned aboard the schooner; on her deck, shielded by high bulwarks, no person was to be seen.

The captain's boat—the cutter—took the lead from the brig, the lieutenant came next, and behind him the second officer.

Suddenly a cry was heard astern of the boats, when, glancing toward the brig, the crews were amused to see the long-legged steward, Tom Wick, perched upon the round-house aft, with a huge pistol in one hand, and in the other a cutlass, which he waved about his head with formidable swiftness, as he shouted:

“Come back! Come back, sir, for me! I was in the hold, looking for a cutlass, when you went! I can't be caged here while there's fighting goin' on—while there's *glorie* to be wonned!”

Behind the speaker, with hands in pockets, hair on end, mouth and eyes bulging, stood the watery-eyed cabin-boy, an interested spectator of the steward's movements.

A moment later, the sailing-master was seen ordering both Wick and the cabin-boy below.

Log turned round with a grim smile, which was reflected on the face of every man in the boat.

The boats were about half-way between the two vessels, when a flash was seen leaping from the white side of the schooner, an eight pound shot came howling along and passed clean through the captain's boat, without injuring a man. The cutter's planks, however, were so badly shattered that she filled in a few minutes, compelling the other boats to take her crew between them.

“Bad commencement,” said Log, coolly.

Encouraged by their officers, the men pulled with a will, which soon brought them within two ship's lengths of the schooner.

This was as far as the boats were permitted to go. There was a crash like thunder as two guns were discharged in succession, when both boats flew to splinters, with several men killed, leaving the rest clinging to oars and fragments.

Four swift-keeled boats were dropped from the schooner when the struggling men were picked up, to be made prisoners.

The crews of the schooner's boats were all stout, swarthy fellows, wearing black flannel suits and trowsers, and well armed with cutlasses, pistols, etc.

"We meet again," said their leader, Rondo, bowing to Captain Log.

"Ay, ay," answered the latter, fiercely, "in a different way from what I expected."

As he spoke, he noticed among the pirate's men the sailors who had deserted the Nautilus.

"Rascals!" he exclaimed, "if I had you aboard the brig I'd make you pay for this piece of treachery."

"You haven't them, nor are you likely to get them," said Rondo. "They are some of my old hands, who left me for the United States on purpose to act as my spies. Hearing of Commodore Porter's intentions, they concluded to ship in one of his fleet, judging that by so doing they might prove of use to me."

He now turned his glance upon Lieutenant Watson.

"After your escape, accomplished with the assistance of my daughter, I knew that I should get you in my clutches again."

"How did you know your daughter helped me?"

"By the footprints on the strip of sand in front of the cave. My child is aboard your vessel. I will soon have her," he added, in a significant tone, not understood by the officers of the Nautilus.

Meanwhile Log kept glancing toward the brig. To be entrapped in this manner, with his own vessel so near, was peculiarly aggravating.

In a few minutes, captors and prisoners were aboard the

schooner, when, glancing round them, the brig officers could not help admiring the neatness which everywhere met their gaze.

The deck was holy-stoned to a clean, smooth white, every ring-bolt was polished so that it shone like silver, while the rigging was coiled in the most orderly manner. Aloft and along the ropes were as taut as aboard a man-of-war, the shrouds seemed in perfect condition, and the yards, tapering beautifully, were balanced with systematic precision.

The captured crews were now bundled into the main hold, while the officers, with the coxswain, were confined in the cabin.

"It is hardly necessary for me to tell you that *you* must die!" said Rondo, addressing the three officers.

"We are not afraid of death," said Log, coolly.

"Such of your men as choose to join me I shall keep," continued Rondo. "The rest I shall lodge on an uninhabited island."

"When do you intend to execute us?" inquired Log, quietly brushing a fly off his coat-sleeve.

"Perhaps at sun-down—perhaps not until daylight, to-morrow. My mode of execution," continued Rondo, with a cruel smile, "is peculiar. Most men wait until a sailor is dead before they fasten shot to his feet to draw him down to the bottom of the sea; whereas, when I want to make 'way with a prisoner, I fasten the shot to him while he is living, so that he may be *drawn down alive*."

"Cruelly worthy of a savage and a lubber like yourself," said Log, contemptuously.

Rondo clenched his teeth and his fists, while his black eyes flashed fire.

"I hate you!" he howled. "Ay, I hate your whole set—hunting us down as if we were so many dogs, and compelling us to leave our island retreat, where we have so long remained unmolested and comfortable."

"Very comfortable and doubtless happy—killing and slaying for gold!" said Log.

"We are no worse than your *land* swindlers, who break the heart of many an unfortunate. The difference is only in the *mode* of killing."

"Poor defense," answered Log—"although there's some truth in what you say, as my lieutenant here"—glancing at Watson—"can testify, he having been robbed of a whole estate. If I had my way, I would hang swindlers, pirates, smugglers, pickpockets, etc., all together! A *cheat*, to my thinking, is as contemptible an object as a pirate."

"If I may be permitted to venture a remark," said the coxswain, "I think a cheat is *contemptibler* than a *smuggler*, seein' as I myself have smuggled my bottle o' grog aboard ship."

"Well," said Log, again addressing Rondo, "if you intend sending us to the bottom, you will perhaps explain that mystery of your disappearance; how it happened that you contrived to vanish so strangely the other day."

"Certainly," answered Rondo. "My masts are so arranged that I can *lower them at a moment's notice*. My distance from you, with a light fog, then prevented you from seeing my hull."

"Ay, ay, now; that is a novel way of disappearing!" said Log. "Nobody but a pirate could ever think of building a schooner in that fashion."

"Nor, beggin' your pardon, sir," said the coxswain, "of sendin' livin' humans to the bottom of the sea with shot tied to their feet, which sartinly is a most lubberly way of goin' to Davy Jones!"

A guard was put over the prisoners, and the captain was about leaving them, when Watson bid him stay a moment, as he had some questions to put to him.

Rondo paused, when the lieutenant spoke of his finding the log-book left, with the name of the Clinton upon it.

"In that ship my parents, with a little girl baby, were passengers from England," he added. "Therefore I hope you will tell me all you know regarding their fate and that of the vessel."

Rondo started, and looked steadily and curiously at the speaker. Then he muttered to himself:

"This accounts for the resemblance."

"What do you mean?" inquired the young man.

"Oh, nothing that it would do you any good to know since your fate is settled," answered the captain, sternly.

"You will at least explain to me about the Clinton?"

"Yes; I see no objection to that."

"Well, then, heave ahead!" cried Log, impatiently. "The young man is much interested in the matter, especially as there was, in that vessel, a will, making him the proprietor of a large estate, out of which he has been cheated."

"The facts, then, are simply these," began Rondo. "One morning, some years ago, I saw a merchant vessel beating along off St. Domingo. Believing she held a valuable cargo, I went out in my schooner and attacked her. Her crew, instead of quietly yielding, resisted me with such weapons as they had aboard. Among them was a gentleman, who fought with great desperation, and whom I heard the captain several times call Mr. Watson."

"My father?" exclaimed the lieutenant, eagerly.

"Doubtless. He and I met in combat, when I succeeded in knocking his cutlass from his grasp. At the same moment one of my men shot him through the head. Soon after, the vessel was ours. We searched her through and through and found some money, but not enough to satisfy us. There was a lady aboard, and I learned that she was the wife of Mr. Watson. She rushed up to her husband's body, and hung over it, weeping, until a bullet from a carbine, which one of my men was handling rather carelessly, passed through her brain and killed her!"

"She had a little girl baby. What became of that?" inquired Watson.

The pirate looked at Watson steadily before he answered.

"Suppose I should tell you that we knocked that on the head?"

"You are a wretch of the very worst kind!" exclaimed Watson, shuddering. "I would not have believed that even a pirate could do such a deed."

"After sinking the vessel," continued Rondo, as if not hearing the remark, "we scuttled and sunk her, preferring this to burning her, as we were afraid the light would attract too much attention."

"Where did all this occur?" inquired Log.

"Right off the coast," answered Rondo.

"And what became of the remainder of the crew?"

"We left them. They went down with the vessel."

"I should have thought some of them might have swum ashore."

"Impossible, since I tied them to the vessel's masts and bulwarks!"

"Ay, ay, now!" cried Log, clenching his fists, "if ever there was a man deserved stringing up, you certainly are that man!"

"There was no alternative," answered Rondo. "The dead could tell no tales! That was why we sunk them in their vessel."

With these words the captain withdrew, leaving the prisoners to talk over the revelation just made.

While they were conversing, Log kept his gaze fixed upon the men placed as a guard over them.

These were sturdy-looking fellows, numbering ten, armed with cutlasses, which they had received orders to use without mercy in case those they guarded should make the slightest attempt to escape.

The four prisoners had on their part been deprived of all arms, so that there would seem at a first glance no possible hope of their escaping.

Log, however, noticed that one of the men would now and then withdraw behind the cabin-door, and that his shipmates, each at different times, would follow, returning soon after with nose and eyes a little reddened.

"I smell something, sir!" whispered the coxswain to the captain; "in my opinion there's brandy cruisin' round in some quarter."

"Hash!" whispered Log, in return, "this brandy may help us!"

As he spoke the taller man repeated the movement previously observed, and this time leaving the cabin-door more ajar than before, he was seen bending over a chest in the state-room, extracting therefrom a large demijohn!

"That is good for us!" whispered Log to the lieutenant. "If they keep on, they will be so boozy that we can overpower them."

Watching the guard keenly, the prisoners observed them stagger, in their efforts to stand firm, against the side of the door.

Finally the wished-for moment arrived when the guard were all scarcely able to stand, when, in fact, three of them had fallen asleep.

Meanwhile Log and his friends had anxiously watched the companion-way, fearful, every moment, that the captain would come and discover the state of his men. It was evident, however, that Ron to now was very busy on deck, the tramp of many feet and his voice constantly issuing commands, being heard.

Log whispered his orders to each of his friends, who immediately obeyed.

The lieutenant, pouncing upon the tallest man, knocked him senseless to the deck, depriving him of his cutlass; the old captain served another in the same manner, while the other two managed the three men who were not asleep.

Then, advancing to the cabin-windows, which were large in proportion to the size of the schooner, the lieutenant, thrusting his head through, and glancing up, beheld, as he had expected, the captain's gig hanging by the after davits.

Owing to the lowness of the schooner's hull, the boat hung within half a foot of the window, so that Watson could easily reach it.

What was to be done, however, must be accomplished with the utmost promptitude and dexterity; one false move would spoil all. Risky business it was to attempt to cut the boat-falls so close to the deck, and with the man at the wheel standing not more than a yard from where the boat hung.

"Wait until I give the word," said Captain Log. "Then you must contrive to cut each boat-fall with a single blow of your cutlass."

In a moment more he was heard giving the command, then the lieutenant, with several skilful slashes, cut the falls of the boat, when the latter dropped with a slight splash into the water.

Whether it was the noise on deck of the officers, mingled with the creaking of ropes and blocks, or owing to the fact that the boatsmen felt drowsy in that calm state of the weather, neither Log nor his party could determine; certain it is that their escape was not even known until, taking to the oars in the boat, they were half-way between the schooner and their own vessel.

As they drew near the, latter Log stood up in the bow.

"Brig ahoy!"

"Hollo!" was answered.

"All ready there, at the gangway!"

Lights flashed about the brig's deck, hasty steps were heard, and as the boat glided alongside, one of the men held up a lantern as if to determine the character of the visitors.

"Where is the sailing-master?" inquired Log, angry at this want of respect, "tell him that the captain of the brig is returned."

"Ay, ay, sir! Beg your pardon!" said the man; "we thought you were all killed!"

A number of other men now appeared, their forms faintly visible behind the rest.

"Ay, ay, now!" roared Log; "such behavior is unbearable. I'll have that sailing-master court-martialed! He leaves the foremast hands to greet their captain aboard a brig of war! Go find him, Watson."

"I'll try," answered the latter, springing up the gangway steps. The rest followed him, when the four were suddenly seized, and thrown down upon their backs!

CHAPTER XI.

THE POWDER-TRAIN.

THE astonishment of the boarding-party at this strange behavior may be imagined. Almost convulsed with rage, Captain Log, for several moments, could only lay and glare up at the fierce men by whom he was surrounded. Then anxiety for his daughter almost drove him mad.

"Ay, ay," he muttered, "I see how it is. You have mutinied. What have you done with my child—tell me that?"

"Down in the hold, where we intend to put you!" exclaimed one of the men.

The fact that a man aboard the vessel had dared thus to lay hands upon his daughter enraged beyond all bounds the

old captain, who had never before seen the discipline and authority of a war-vessel abused in this strange way.

"Why, blast you! You set of bloody lubbers; don't you know that this business will cost every man of you his life? What has put the idea of mutiny into your heads?"

The only reply to this speech was a sardonic smile, reflected upon the face of each man.

"Speak! you fools—speak!"

Still, however, there was no answer.

The coxswain, who lay not far off bound hand and foot like a sheep, now turned to one of the men.

"Put your hand in the left pocket of my pants, and there you'll find a plug of 'baccy! Jist put it to my mouth so that I can take a chew, you infarnal lubber!"

"We are not under your orders, now, any more than the captain's," was the reply.

There was a coarse burst of laughter.

"You shall all pay dearly for this!" growled Log, who now panted like a chained lion.

The prisoners were dragged to the main hold and thrust therein, after which the hatch was closed and fastened above them.

All was darkness in the hold.

"Liech!" called the captain, "are you there?"

"Yes. Oh, papa!" from a corner of the hold, toward which the whole party now directed their steps.

"Ay, sir, we are all here!" came the voice of the sailing-master. "Is that you, captain?"

"Yea. What does this mean?"

"I believe," answered the sailing-master, "that there was a mistake made regarding those men we put in confinement. The deserter's statement to Lieutenant Watson evidently was false. The names upon the paper were *not* those of the conspirators!"

"I dare say you are right," said Watson. "A traitor's statement, as that man's was, can not be relied upon."

Explanations now ensued. The sailing-master stated that soon after the departure of the boats, the men left with him aboard the brig, marched aft, threw him to the deck and hauled down the brig's colors. Afterward they thrust him,

together with Lucia, Dot and the steward, into the hold. "They would give no explanation of their conduct," he added, "but I believe it is their intention to surrender the vessel to the pirates! In fact, these, instead of the men we confined in the run, I believe are the traitors!"

"We can hope for no mercy," said Captain Log, in a low voice, to Mr. Barchell, "if we fall into that rascal's hands."

Lucia heard what was said.

"Oh, papa!" she exclaimed, "it was a sorry day for you when you set out on this expedition."

"I think of you and my vessel and crew," answered Log. "For myself, I am an old hulk, and it matters little how soon I go."

"The same I, sir," chimed in the coxswain, "a-beggin' your pardon for makin' comparisons. If the rascals hadn't taken away my 'baccy, I wouldn't think a blessed minute of myself."

"We must contrive some way," said Watson, "to get the better of the mutineers, before they surrender the brig to the schooner's people. I don't think they'll do *that* before daylight."

A consultation was held, but no plan could then be devised. While the prisoners were still talking, a noise was heard as of steps in the cabin.

"They are a comin' to—to—make 'way with us!" stammered the steward, evidently much frightened.

The coxswain, who by this time had succeeded in disengaging his wrists, and in untying his companions' hands, gave the speaker a hard poke in the ribs.

"Arrest, you Wick!" he muttered, "or I'll wring your long neck. You frighten Miss Lucia."

Wick instantly became silent.

"Now, then," said Log, "here, Wick, is a chance for you to distinguish yourself. Creep up to those bulkheads and listen to see what the mutineers are about."

"My legs bein' tied, it would be impossible for me to get there," answered Wick.

"I'll go," said Watson.

Lucia uttered a remonstrative cry, but the lieutenant crept aft, and was soon at the partition.

He heard a noise as if the mutineers were opening the run-hatch. Of this he was soon assured by what followed.

"Below there!" cried a gruff voice.

"Ay, ay," was answered from one of those confined in the run.

"Forty of us have taken the brig. The officers are our prisoners, and must die. We do not, however, wish to kill only such of you men as are unwilling to join us and Rondo's party. We intend surrendering the brig to the pirate, and in fact joining his party. Who of you are willing to do the same? Remember there will be money made in this business, for although Commodore Porter's fleet will chase the pirates out of their old haunts, still they can seek new ones."

At first there was no reply; then a loud, clear voice, which Watson at once recognized as that of an old tar named Ben Warren, responded:

"We will all die sooner than league ourselves with traitors!"

"Is that the decision of all?"

"Ay, ay, of all!" was the unanimous response.

"Then your fate is sealed!"

The hatch was closed with a loud click, and the speaker was heard going on deck.

Watson returned to his party, reporting what he had heard.

"Ay, ay, now," remarked Log, "it seems then that the fellows we put in the run are really innocent men. I wish we could get them out of the hold. The more of us together the better."

"If we could knock away the bulkheads without being heard by our enemies, we could do so," said Watson.

"There's no need of knocking 'em away," said Tom Wick. "There's a loose board which can be pried out."

At this, Watson crept back to the bulkhead, and soon finding the loose board, pried it out. Then stepping into the cabin he cautiously glanced round him.

At present the cabin was deserted. He glanced at the companion-way, and perceived that the door was shut in a manner which convinced him that it was fastened on the outside.

He now turned his attention to the run-batch, pulling forth the bar holding it fast, and opening it.

"Below there! You can come up!" he whispered.

"Who is there?"

"I—Lieutenant Watson. Make haste!"

The twenty prisoners were soon up. Watson procured matches and a dark-lantern from his room; then made his way back to his companions, followed by the liberated men.

His next movement was to light the lantern in such a way that the gleam, while showing the faces of the whole party, could not be detected by those on deck.

"Ay, here they are!" said Captain Log. "Men," he added, frankly, "I'm sorry for the mistake I made. You are all good men—that's been proved beyond a doubt, and you will all stand by me in retaking the brig!"

"Ay, ay, sir, heart and soul!" was the response.

"We have been talking the matter over, during your absence," continued Log to Watson, "and have concluded to endeavor to make our way on deck and trust to the suddenness of our attack."

"You will not succeed," answered Watson.

"If you do not want to go with us," said Log, testily, "say the word and—"

A reproachful glance from Lucia checked him, while the first lieutenant knitted his brows somewhat sternly.

"Have I ever given you cause, sir," he inquired, "to think I would stay behind when there was fighting going on?"

The old fellow was sorry at once.

"No," he answered, grasping the lieutenant's hand. "I was wrong to speak so. This bad business makes me scarcely know what I am saying."

"I am ready at any moment," said Watson, "to go with you."

"That is right. Now let us count our party. One—two—three"—looking at the steward, who, however, interrupted him before he could count farther.

"Beg pardon, sir, but I'm conflicted with a rheumaticism in my left leg, sir. Otherwise I would like to go, as my sphere—"

"We've seen enough of your sphere, Tom Wick," said the old coxswain, dryly.

"True enough," remarked Log. "However, Tom Wick, if you do not feel like going up with us, you may stay below here to take care of the young ladies."

"We can take care of ourselves, dear papa, better than the steward can," said Lucia, with that contempt all women feel toward cowards.

"If they should attempt to harm a hair of your bright head, Miss," exclaimed Wick, "I should jump up and knock every one of 'em down."

"I thought you had the rheumatism so you couldn't move," said Log.

The steward colored at being detected.

"Well," said Log, "there are twenty-five of us, at any rate. Twenty-five true men against forty traitors is not bad. The brig will be ours before daylight if we work right."

"More fighting," said Lucia, sally.

"I trust they will be successful," muttered Dot. "With such men"—glancing at Watson—"they ought to succeed."

The voice was low, but Watson heard the words, and, unperceived by Dot, detected the glance.

They sent an indescribable thrill of pleasure through him. He felt glad to think that Dot had such a good opinion of him.

A consultation took place. It was agreed that the best way to get on deck would be through the brig's cabin windows, which were large enough for that purpose. Before going they could arm themselves with such weapons as had been left in the cabin: a few cutlasses, and several old muskets.

This plan being decided on, they waited until about mid night, when they started.

Entering the cabin, which was still deserted, they armed themselves with what weapons they could find; then cautiously opening the cabin windows, peered out.

The night was pitch dark, although in the vicinity of the brig the gloom was slightly relieved by a lantern hung up in the main rigging.

"I will go first," said Watson, "and reconnoiter."

Before Log could utter a word of objection, the young man,

crawling through one of the windows, grasped a rope and climbed to the brig's deck. Keeping in the shadow of the round-house, he glanced round him, to behold seven dark figures a few yards ahead of him, stretched upon the deck near the cabin.

"That looks well for us," he thought, and creeping past the prostrate men, who were all fast asleep, he made his way further forward.

Gathered near the windlass, he now beheld at least fifteen men, apparently keeping a vigilant watch. These fellows, wearing their pistols and cutlasses ready for use, it was evident were not to be taken by surprise.

Watson turned to make his way back as he had come, along the gangway, but, unfortunately, the outline of his form was now seen.

"Who is that?" was questioned.

The young man, making no answer, quickened his movements, when at least a dozen of the traitors came rushing after him.

Watson dodged behind one of the guns, when his pursuers, thinking he had kept on in the shadow beyond, passed him. This gave him a chance to lower himself unperceived over the rail, when, making as little noise as possible, he crept round to the stern windows.

Clutching the sill of one, he was lifted in by his friends, to whom he at once made his report.

"In that case," said Log, "it would only be a useless waste of life to try the attack : so we had better return."

The party returned to the hold, to endeavor to devise some new plan for escape.

Meanwhile the hours seemed to go by with astonishing rapidity.

Daylight came, and with it a light breeze, which must enable the brig and the schooner soon to get alongside of each other. Through one of the cabin dead-lights, Log could detect the schooner, about a league to windward, bearing down toward the brig with signals flying, evidently in answer to some displayed from the latter vessel.

The sight made him uneasy, while exciting his rage. The traitors were certainly taking great liberties with his craft.

The coxswain, who had meanwhile been for some time reflecting, suddenly looked up.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, if I may ventur' a remark, I have a happy idee, which I am sartin will meet with your *reproval*."

"An idea? Out with it!" exclaimed Log; "ideas are about all we can indulge in, at present."

The coxswain glanced at the young ladies, in a way which showed Log that he would rather *they* should not hear him.

"Out with it!" exclaimed the captain, poking the man so violently in the ribs, that he fell upon his back.

The coxswain scratched his head, and again glanced uneasily at the girls.

The whole party had taken up their quarters for the present in the cabin, and all were so near each other that nothing could be said without being heard by every one present.

"Well," said Bill Burke, when again urged by the captain to go ahead, "as I said, it's a happy idee, bein' this, that we might blow up the brig and all that's in her, the magazine bein' right under us!"

"But in doing that, we would blow up ourselves!" said Log.

"Ay, that's it—that 'ere's the beauty of the *idee*!" exclaimed Bill. "Them rascals won't then have the satisfaction of capturin' us!"

Log glanced round him with a grim smile, to see how this plan was received by his companions.

Watson, the sailing-master and the recently liberated men did not seem at all shocked, while the two girls, although quite pale, looked firm. Tom Wick alone conducted himself in a singular manner. He lay upon his back, kicking his long legs about, while shivering as if in a spasm.

"Oh, no?" he suddenly exclaimed, "of course nobody would think of *that*!"

"Hush!" cried the captain, sternly, as he again glanced toward the approaching schooner; "I approve of the plan, for there seems no other. Sooner than give the rascals a chance to capture us and our beautiful brig, I would be blown up a thousand times. What say, men?"

"Ay, ay, ay!" responded the sailors, unanimously, catching

the enthusiasm of their leader, while Watson, the second lieutenant, and Mr. Burchell signified their approval by quietly shaking the old fellow's hand.

"The young ladies may not approve," said Mr. Burchell.

"What say, Lucia? Which do you prefer—death or falling into the hands of the pirates?"

Lucia turned even paler than before, as she answered firmly and quietly.

"Death!"

"I am willing to die with the rest, if that is the decree!" said Dot.

"No, no!" cried Watson, "you shall not die! We will launch you astern on a plank before the vessel blows up. Of course your father will not harm his own daughter when he picks you up, whereas he would injure Lucia!"

"Yes! I am sorry to say I am afraid my friend," glancing at the captain's daughter, "would fare hard among those rude men in spite of all my pleadings. They would not spare her life for me! But," she added, "I would prefer dying with the rest of you, because the lieutenant of that vessel would make me his wife. My father would force me!"

The officers conversed together in low, solemn tones.

"The pirate is coming up, fast!" remarked the sailing-master, glancing through one of the dead-lights. "We have not long to hesitate!"

"Look well, Mr. Burchell," said Log, "and see if there is no other craft around."

The sailing-master did so, but reported no vessel besides the schooner in sight. The sky was clouded, and there were black shadows all round upon the water; the wind was freshening, and its hum was heard, like a mournful requiem, in the brig's shrouds.

Suddenly Burchell started back with a low cry.

"There it is again!" he exclaimed.

"What?"

"THE SPECTER SKIPPER!"

The captain looked through the dead-light, to see, sure enough, the great white form, looming from the ocean through the fog, about twenty fathoms off, his speaking trumpet elevated in the usual manner.

"Bumph!" muttered Log, as the apparition suddenly vanished, "I would have liked to live to investigate that mystery!"

The blowing up of the brig was now decided upon.

A long train of twisted oakum, saturated with dampened powder, was carried from the cabin down through the lower hatchway to the powder-magazine, after which the upper end was lighted.

With a hissing sound, the train began burning, the sparks flying out on all sides.

Lucia, crouching by her father, with her arm thrown round him, hid her face in her hands, and the old man knew by the tremor shaking her frame, that the death in store was fearful for this young creature to contemplate. Gradually her arm, as if she was anxious to feel another form, was upraised, the white hand closing firmly over that of Watson.

Full of pity for the girl, the young man said :

"Speak, Lucia, it is not too late yet. The train may be put out if you have changed your mind about dying in this manner?"

"No," answered Lucia, gently, "I have not changed my mind!! It is for you and papa I tremble as well as for myself!"

As Watson looked down upon the two fair, shrinking girls, he could not but realize how terrible for such beautiful forms to be torn, mangled and blackened by powder and fire!

Then over his mind swept one of those happy thoughts, which are often born of perilous situations.

This was, to save all those in the hold by the sacrifice of one life—that life *his own!*

As mentioned, it would yet take the fire-train many minutes to communicate with the powder-magazine. In that time Watson trusted he could accomplish his object, which was this, to make his way on deck through the cabin-window, as before, and inform the conspirators that a train was lighted and that in a few minutes the vessel would be blown up! At this, the mutineers would open the companion-slide and peer down to perceive that he had spoken truth. Those below could easily prevent an entrance to put out the train, as only one man at a time would be able to pass through the companion-way. Fearful of being blown up, the traitors would then take

to their boats to escape the peril—first, probably, shooting Watson.

Then those below could at once put out the train and take possession of the brig.

The young man quickly communicated his intention to Captain Log, who, however, declared that *he* would be the one to go up and save his vessel with his life.

“No!” exclaimed Watson, “as I devised the plan, I claim the privilege of being the one to carry it out.”

“Avast, there, sir, if I may be so bold!” remarked Bill Burke. “You two bein’ officers, and I nothin’ but an old hulk of a coxs’n, s’pose you let *me* go.”

He was actually rushing toward the cabin-windows, when Watson pushed him aside. “Go back, Burke!” he exclaimed. “Remember, my man, you have a wife and child at home to take care of! I have none, and if I had, I wouldn’t allow you to do *my* work when it is of this nature.”

So saying, before any person—not even excepting Lucia, who had impulsively run toward her lover, could prevent him, the young man swung himself through the window, and by a rope, was soon on deck.

The mutineers aft at once beheld Watson. There was a cry of mingled rage and surprise, as half a dozen rushed toward him, with cutlasses uplifted.

“Hold!” exclaimed the young man. “Not too fast! Are you aware that a train, leading to the powder-magazine, has been lighted below, and that the vessel is to be blown up?”

“It is a lie!” exclaimed one of the men.

“You can open the companion-slide, and by looking down see for yourselves!” was Watson’s reply.

Some of the men did so, when it required but one glance to satisfy them, as the train was now throwing off showers of sparks of lurid fire.

“We will soon put an end to this business!” exclaimed a tall fellow, who seemed to act as captain of the conspirators. “Come on, men!”

He endeavored to enter the companion-way, when Captain Log and his companions appeared, the former pointing a pistol at his head.

“Another step, and I send a bullet through your brain!”

The man drew back. Meanwhile he heard the train hissing, and saw the lurid fire running along like a red stake.

"In two minutes the vessel will be blown up!" shouted Log.

The men knew this was true. There was no time to lose. Before the party below could be overpowered, the catastrophe must take place.

"To the boats, shipmates!" the fellow cried, "to the boats for your lives!"

As he spoke, he barred the companion-slide, so that those below might not escape.

Meanwhile his shipmates, instead of obeying, stood staring at him, as if expecting farther explanations.

"Down with the boats!" he screamed. "I tell you the vessel is to be blown up in a few seconds!"

This started all on deck. Away they went, lowering two boats and tumbling into them with all possible dispatch, in their eagerness for self-preservation forgetting all about the lieutenant. The moment they were in the boats, however, they remembered him, and as they put off from the vessel's side, several pistol-shots were fired. Fortunately neither struck Watson, though coming in dangerous proximity to his head, one shot cutting off a piece of flesh from his right ear.

Surprised and thankful for his unexpected preservation, he now sprang to the companion, and, opening the slide, shouted in voice of thunder:

"ALL CLEAR ON DECK! PUT OUT THE TRAIN! THE VESSEL IS OURS!"

CHAPTER XII.

REVELATIONS.

THE effect of that happy announcement upon all below may be imagined. Her lover's well-known voice, betokening that he was unharmed, was sweet music to Lucia.

In an instant the sailing-master and the old coxswain had

extinguished the train, when Lucia, with a glad cry, threw herself into her father's arms.

"There is much to be done yet," said Captain Log "Meanwhile, God bless that boy!"

Up sprung Tom Wick, his eyes flashing, his whole frame seeming to expand as he pulled his cutlass from his belt, and danced about, exclaiming:

"Where are they? Lead me to the rascals, what has caused us so much trouble, and *I'll switch 'em!*"

His voice brought upon the scene a new-comer, none other than little "Waxey"—the watery-eyed cabin-boy, who was seen crawling forth like a mouse from under the pantry, where, it seemed, he had been hidden, from the moment the vessel was taken possession of by the conspirators. That he had made good use of his time while there, was shown by the stains of cranberry jelly about the mouth and other parts of the face.

All were soon on deck, when Log grasped Watson's hand, and thanked him for so bravely carrying out his stratagem.

"We have much to do," remarked Watson, pointing out the schooner, still bowling along toward the brig, now not more than half a league distant. "We have to save our men aboard that vessel, unless, indeed, they have already been executed."

Log glanced aloft, to behold a red and black flag fluttering at the main, evidently the signal agreed upon to let the schooner's people know that the brig was captured.

"We will let that signal continue flying," said Log, with a grim smile, "and by that means will get the schooner in our power."

"She may suspect that something is wrong, if she sees the boats putting off to leeward," suggested Watson.

"She has not seen them yet, and will not, provided we set the mainsail, until she is too close to escape us."

The mainsail was set, and the brig, which had previously been lying to, was headed, close hauled, for the schooner. Thus running along, her mainsail effectually screened the boats from the enemy, which was now in a line with it, running toward it, directly before the wind.

Captain Log now had good men stationed at his guns,

ready to fire at the moment when he should give the word.

The guns brought to bear upon the schooner were an eight-pounder forward and two nines just abaft the fore-castle. With these he hoped to either put the vessel in a sinking condition, or cripple her so that she would become an easy prey.

There was one fact, however, which, naturally enough, made him uneasy. This was that there were but twenty-five men, including officers, aboard the brig, while the schooner numbered four times as many. In case he *should* sink the schooner, what hope of victory was there with his handful of men, when his vessel should be attacked by the pirate crew?

He stated this difficulty to his first lieutenant.

"Ay, ay, sir," said Watson, "you are right. If any more of Porter's fleet were in sight, now, we might hope for success."

The captain swept the horizon far and near, but there was no sign of any vessel except the schooner.

Watson reflected, then said:

"The prisoners from our brig, aboard that schooner, number forty good men. If they have not been executed, and if we could only contrive to liberate them and put arms in their hands, the capture of those rascals would be an easy matter."

"We can not do that."

"Perhaps not, and then again perhaps we *can*. In the confusion which will result from the schooner's being in a sinking condition, I believe a bold man might contrive to make his way on deck and into the hold to liberate the prisoners. When it is reported that the craft is sinking, of course the guard will be withdrawn and all will make for the boats."

Log's face lighted up.

"Ay, ay, I now have hopes of success. But, be that as it may I am determined to sink that schooner."

The latter vessel drew nearer, every moment, until within about four ship's lengths of the brig, when, the latter chanceing to swing a little, the mutineers' boats, with signals of warning flying, were rendered visible to the schooner's crew.

In an instant the little vessel, graceful as a bird, came up into the wind with yards braced up sharp, and shot away at

a great rate, the foam flying about her bows, and the ends of her tapering yards to leeward almost touching the water.

"Now, then," growled Log, "now is your time. Ready—aim—fire!"

Bang! bang! bang! went the three guns, one after the other, and being well aimed, they made fearful havoc.

The schooner's main-topmast was seen to go by the board, while the water, bubbling and boiling near her water-line, proclaimed that she had also been struck in that quarter.

She yawed frightfully—then plunged her bows under—and gave other indications of sinking.

"Hooray! hooray! hooray!" cheered Log's men.

At the same moment a boat, manned by Watson, with four men, among them the trusty old coxswain, Bill Burke, shot from under the brig's quarter, and was pulled rapidly for the schooner.

So busy now were the latter in getting down boats and putting trunks, etc., in them, that they did not notice the approaching craft.

Watson pulled alongside to starboard, just after all the schooner's boats had put off from the larboard quarter.

Hauling round under the vessel's half-submerged bows, he sprang into one of her open ports, to hear beneath him in the hold, the despairing cries of the prisoners, who had been left to perish by going down in the sinking craft.

Poor fellows! When Watson and the coxswain, unbarring the hatch, looked down, they were already almost up to their necks in water, clinging to ropes, barrels and casks.

"Come, my brave fellows!" shouted the lieutenant, as he and the coxswain hastened to throw down ropes—"you are saved!"

A joyful cheer was the answer. In ten minutes all had climbed through the broad, open hatchway.

"No time to lose," continued Watson, as he led them toward the long-boat. "But how happens it that you were not executed?"

"At daylight," said one seaman, the boatswain, "we thought we were going to be, but were afterward told by the captain himself that he'd soon have every man from the brig in his power, when he could send us all to Davy Jones together."

"Human hopes is doomed to disapp'intment," remarked Bill Burke, the coxswain, "especially the hopes of the wicked."

Watson soon had every man in the long-boat. Meanwhile the brig had been kept off, so as to pick up the men before they could be intercepted by the pirate's boats, which were making straight for the Nautilus, Rondo evidently relying upon the handful of men aboard to capture the vessel, and thus atone for the loss of his schooner.

In a few minutes, however, Log had picked up the occupants of the long-boat, so that, with the exception of the mutineers, he had his full crew aboard.

Rondo now discovered the trick which had been played him. He saw the long-boat and its occupants picked up, and knew that the prisoners he had left to perish in the schooner were rescued.

His face lighted up, however, when he saw the mutineers' boats coming to join him.

Determined that no such concentration should take place, Captain Log skillfully directed the brig between the two lines of boats, and with a nine-pound shot, sent the mutineers pulling away at a great rate.

A shot from the brig's starboard side made fearful havoc among the pirate's crews. It shattered one of the boats to splinters and killed and wounded many of her men.

"That pays off old scores!" remarked Log, grimly smiling.

Rondo, picking up the swimmers, came on until another shot made mischief among his crew, when, evidently concluding that the capturing of the brig would prove too hot for him, he headed away from her, his men pulling shoreward with might and main.

Determined to capture the pirates, Log crowded all sail, and having a fresh breeze, ran down after them at a rate which soon brought him within a ship's length of them.

"Along there!" roared the old searion, through his trumpet. "Stop pulling and give yourselves up, or I'll sink every man!"

With a hoarse, dissatisfied growl, Rondo, who, it could now be discovered, was badly wounded, reluctantly gave the desired order.

Ten minutes after all his men, except the wounded, were

confined, handcuffed and otherwise well secured, in the brig's hold. Log now directed his attention to the mutineers, who were seen far away, half hidden by a mist, gathering to windward.

He bore up, close hauled, and endeavored to overtake them, but was unsuccessful. They were never afterward heard of, but as there was a severe storm the next day, it was the universal opinion that they had been capsized and had gone to the bottom.

When he relinquished the pursuit, Log, glancing toward the spot where the schooner had gone down, was surprised to see the tops of her masts protruding out of water.

He paid a visit to Rondo, who was extended upon a berth in the cabin, with Dot by his side giving him water, and otherwise administering to his wants.

Her eyes were full of tears, for the doctor had just told her that her father could not live many hours, a fragment of shot having passed through his lungs.

"Send your first lieutenant to me!" gasped Rondo, suddenly glaring at Log. "I may as well tell him, I suppose!"

Watson being summoned, instantly came.

Rondo looked at him a moment; then said in a faint voice:

"Aboard the schooner you asked me what became of your little sister—the little girl baby with your parents?"

"Yes; and you said you had killed it."

"No," answered Rondo, smiling. "I did not say I *had*. I said '*What if I had?*' The girl, now a young woman, lives! I took the baby, and my wife, who was then living, cared for it. After *she* died, I brought it up as well as I could, for I had got to liking the child! *Here she is!*"

Rondo pointed straight at Dot!

"My sister!" exclaimed Watson, while Dot also uttered a cry of surprise, not unmixed with joy.

Lucia, who was not far off tending a wounded sailor, was also not a little pleased. She had really grown jealous of Dot, and was overjoyed to understand that the mysterious influence which Watson and the girl had seemed to exert over each other, was solely due to their close relationship, unknown to themselves.

"Can you prove this?" cried the captain, "although it's

hardly necessary, for there certainly is a marked resemblance between them, which I have noticed ere now but have merely attributed to fancy."

"If she really be my sister," said Watson, "there will be found upon her right arm a certain birthmark—a cross, which my mother attributed to her admiration of a beautiful silk English flag, waving in front of the hotel where she lodged months before the child was born! It seems she wrote about it to the wife of my uncle, who showed me the letter."

"I have such a mark!" said Dot, blushing, as she bared her ivory white arm, and showed the cross. "Here it is!"

"And now," continued Rondo, "for the good of this child, I will reveal another secret. All along under the water, in this locality, there extends a sunken rock, as I have proved by sounding as well as other facts."

"Ay, ay," said Log, "and that is why your schooner's masts are still visible?"

"Yes. It was why the CLINTON's masts also were visible after she sunk. As I have said, we obtained a little money but not as much as we had hoped for, from that vessel. We had cut away her masts, so that they might not be seen and lead to an investigation of her fate, and thus, hidden by the dark waters, she remained for many years.

"Then I took a notion to hoist up the wreck a little and send divers to search it for *more money*, which my men seemed to think must be in the vessel.

"One of them said he was certain that when we were approaching in our boats to board the vessel, he saw the passenger who afterward fought so hard, Mr. Watson, run forward with a box under his arm, and climb over into the head whence he soon after reappeared *without the box*.

"I concluded, however, that if the box contained money, Mr. Watson had sunk it in the sea, rather than have it fall into our hands, and therefore I had little hope of ever obtaining it.

"My men seemed to think that the box might have been lowered, and in some way attached to the keel, so that there might be a possibility of its afterward being found. As I have said, I paid no heed to these hints, until recently, when, at length, I hoisted the wreck a little and set my divers at work.

Nothing, however, of value could be found, and there was no sign of the missing box."

"That box doubtless contained the will, leaving me the estate out of which I was swindled," said Watson. "Beyond question this seems to prove that it is lost."

"I don't think you will ever find it," said Rondo. "And now for the explanation of another mystery—the apparition of the SPECTER SKIPPER, which—"

A choking sensation in his throat seemed to prevent further utterance. His eyes became glazed, rolled in his head a moment, then he fell back dead!

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

NEXT morning the remains of the pirate captain were taken ashore and buried.

Although Dot now understood that this man was not her father, yet she could not help feeling sorry for him. She planted vines and wild-flowers over his grave, and, when returning to the vessel, cast behind her many a lingering glance.

"My dear sister," said Watson, clasping her hand, when they arrived aboard the Nautilus. "Thank God, you at least are left to me. No longer shall you be persecuted by ruffians. You are now under *my* protection."

"There was only one who persecuted me, brother, and he I learn is dead—killed by a shot from your brig—the first lieutenant of the pirates. I could have never loved such a bad hearted man!"

Watson gazed upon her with fond admiration, feeling proud of his young sister, who, notwithstanding her having been brought up among a horde of rude, lawless sea-rovers, had preserved, uncontaminated, the purity and goodness of a gentle nature.

After some more conversation, Watson touched upon the subject of the SPECTER SKIPPER.

"What is that mystery, Dot? Can you not explain it?"

"Yes. But my father—I mean Rondo, made me take oath that I would never reveal it, and I am bound to respect my oath, even though I know that the captain himself was about explaining the matter."

"I am determined to investigate it," said Watson.

Upon this subject Log and he were agreed. They were unable to find out any thing from the pirate prisoners, who maintained a stolid silence when questioned.

Among the prisoners were the three men who had deserted from the brig. It seemed that these fellows—Rondo's spies—were the sole cause of the mutiny which had taken place aboard the brig. They had poisoned the minds of many of the men, and by holding out golden hopes to them, induced them to undertake the capture of the vessel and deliver her into the hands of the pirates.

On the day after Rondo's burial, Captain Log stepped to Watson's side.

"Look," said he, grasping the young man's hand, "somehow I can't get over thinking about that will, and what a glorious thing it would be if it could be found, and you and your new-found sister get what rightfully is yours."

"There is no hope of finding it," said Watson. "I have given up that idea."

"I think differently."

"You do?"

"Yes. If the box was sunk to the bottom, it may have lodged in some fissure among the rocks. At all events, it would have been too far under and too heavy to be carried away by the current."

"I am not so sure of that."

"Of one thing you may be certain. The current only extends to a certain depth, and is some fathoms above the bottom. The sailing-master says he is certain upon that point. Therefore, if we can only find the sunken wreck of the Clinton, I don't doubt that we may also find your box."

"It is worth trying for, after all," said Watson, his face lighting up.

Two days later, the weather being favorable, Log com-

enced sounding for the wreck. Rondo having stated that it was upon the same sunken rock upon which the schooner had lodged, the captain had only to follow the line to it, to eventually find the old wreck.

Peering down into the water, which was now slightly ruffled, the men could see the outline of the old hulk, which in fair weather must be plainly visible.

It was the opinion of Log that the box was somewhere under the vessel. He therefore gave orders for hoisting the wreck. The preparations for doing this were not completed until the following day.

Then the order to hoist away was given, and the capstan went merrily round.

In about two hours, the old worm-eaten hull of the sunken craft was lifted. The bows came up first, and with them, protruding from under the old broken stay-sail boom, the object which had so excited the wonder and curiosity of all hands: the SPECTER SKIPPER, now proven to be nothing more than the FIGURE-HEAD of the unfortunate vessel!

This figure-head, which was hewn from *marble*, was so firmly attached to the ship's head, that it had withstood the waves and storms of many years, without being torn from its fastenings. These, however, were now found to have become loose, showing that had it been left unmolested, it would have given way in a few months.

"Ay, ay," said Captain Log, "the appearance and disappearance of this thing is to be easily accounted for. After Rondo hoisted up the wreck, it became loosely wedged in a rocky fissure, with its bows uplifted. In rough weather, or even when the wind blew pretty fresh, the bows, occasionally caught by a sea, would be lifted far upward, thus protruding the figure-head above the water, while the rest of the wreck remained invisible."

This explanation, from a subsequent examination, as well as what could now be gleaned from the pirates themselves, was proven to be correct. The natives of the island had credited the apparition to supernatural causes: a notion which it suited Rondo's purposes to encourage. By correctly predicting the appearance of the SPECTER SKIPPER, he inspired them with the belief that he was in league with this strange

"sea-demon," thus exciting their awe and veneration, and preventing the betrayal of his band, all of whom had taken oath never to explain the mystery without his consent.

Gliding over the smooth waters in their boats or canoes, the natives might themselves have discovered the secret, but for the black shadows under water, which, thrown from a jutting rock, as well as from the wreck itself, ever kept the marble figure-head shrouded from the view of those above.

"We'll have this image aboard and take it home with us," said Captain Log.

Accordingly, having given the necessary orders, he was pleased to see the figure detached from the wreck and taken aboard. This work caused it to hold, for several moments, an inverted position, when a stream of water was seen to pour forth from an opening in the back of it, thus proving that it was hollow.

"That accounts for the moaning, humming noise we heard when we passed the image, on the night after the chase," remarked Watson.

As he spoke, a clinking sound was heard, and the end of an iron bar was seen protruding through the opening on the back of the image!

A suspicion—a happy thought, flashed through Watson's brain. He sprung forward, pulled forth the box, and in a few minutes had forced open the lid with a hatchet, to discover the papers he was so anxious to obtain: the will bequeathing to him the estate out of which he had been swindled by his uncle!

"Behold!" exclaimed Captain Log, "the meaning of the 'Watson's passenger'—Mr. Watson—being seen making for the bow with the box under his arm. He deposited the box in the figure-head, hoping that it might subsequently be discovered and given to its rightful owner. The pirates did not guess that it was hollow, the fissure being concealed when attached to the wreck by the sculptured jacket, the bottom of which partially hung over it, as well as by the wood-work beneath."

Great was the rejoicing aboard the vessel at this discovery, when Captain Log, obeying the impulse of the moment, explained it to all hands.

The men loved their first lieutenant, and cheer after cheer attested their joy at his sudden accession to prosperity.

In due time, every pirate having been routed from the sea, and by the indefatigable efforts of Commodore Porter, the *Nautilus* arrived home.

The discovery of the *Clinton* was made known to the vessel's owners, who declared that they were puzzled to account for the marble figure-head of the *SPECTER SKIPPER*, as the vessel had sailed away with the wooden image of a "sea-queen" at her bows.

On reflection, however, one of the owners remembered that the *Clinton's* captain had written to him from England that the figure-head of the "sea-queen" being broken, he had formed the novel idea of having it replaced by a marble one, although he had not yet decided as to what the image should represent.

To conclude, Watson, by means of the will, regained his estate, greatly to the rage and mortification of his step-uncle, who at once left the country and was never again heard of by those who had there known him.

The lieutenant soon after married Lucia, who made him an excellent wife. Dot, who for many years has been the wife of a respectable Boston banker, resides with them.

Not far from them, in a little stone cottage by the sea, lives old Ben Burke, the former coxswain of the *Nautilus*, almost ninety years of age. His wife and only child died years ago—a sad blow to Burke, who, however, has by this time partially recovered his cheerfulness.

Among the many yarns which the old seaman was long accustomed to "spin" to Watson's children, as well as to those of the lieutenant's sister Dot, was the story of the *SPECTER SKIPPER*.

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The King of the Mice. For a number of persons.

The King of the Mice. For three males.
The King of the Mice. For a number of females.
The King of the Mice. For four females and two males.
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The auction. For numerous characters.</p> |
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Kleberg's on the war Age bluntly considered, Early rising, The wasp and the bee, Comic Grammar, No. 1, I'm not a single man, A. Ward's advice, Bunton on Pickwick, Romeo and Juliet, Opium,	Pop, A Texan Eulogium, How to be a fireman, The United States, Puff's ess't of himself, Practical phrenology, Beautiful, Cabbage, Disagreeable people, What is a bachelor like? Funny folks,	A song of woe, Ward's trip to Richm'd, Parody, The mountebank, Compound interest, A sermon on the text, Old dog Jock, The fishes' toilet, Brian O'Linn, Crockett to office-seekers Who is my opponent?	Political stump speech, Comic Grammar, No. 2 Farewell to the bottle, The cork leg, The smack in school, Slick's definition of wife Tale of a bat, The debating club, A Dutch sermon, Lecture on locomotion Mrs. Caudle on nabe' use
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